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THE SERBIAN FRONT
IN MACEDONIA

E. P. STEBBING



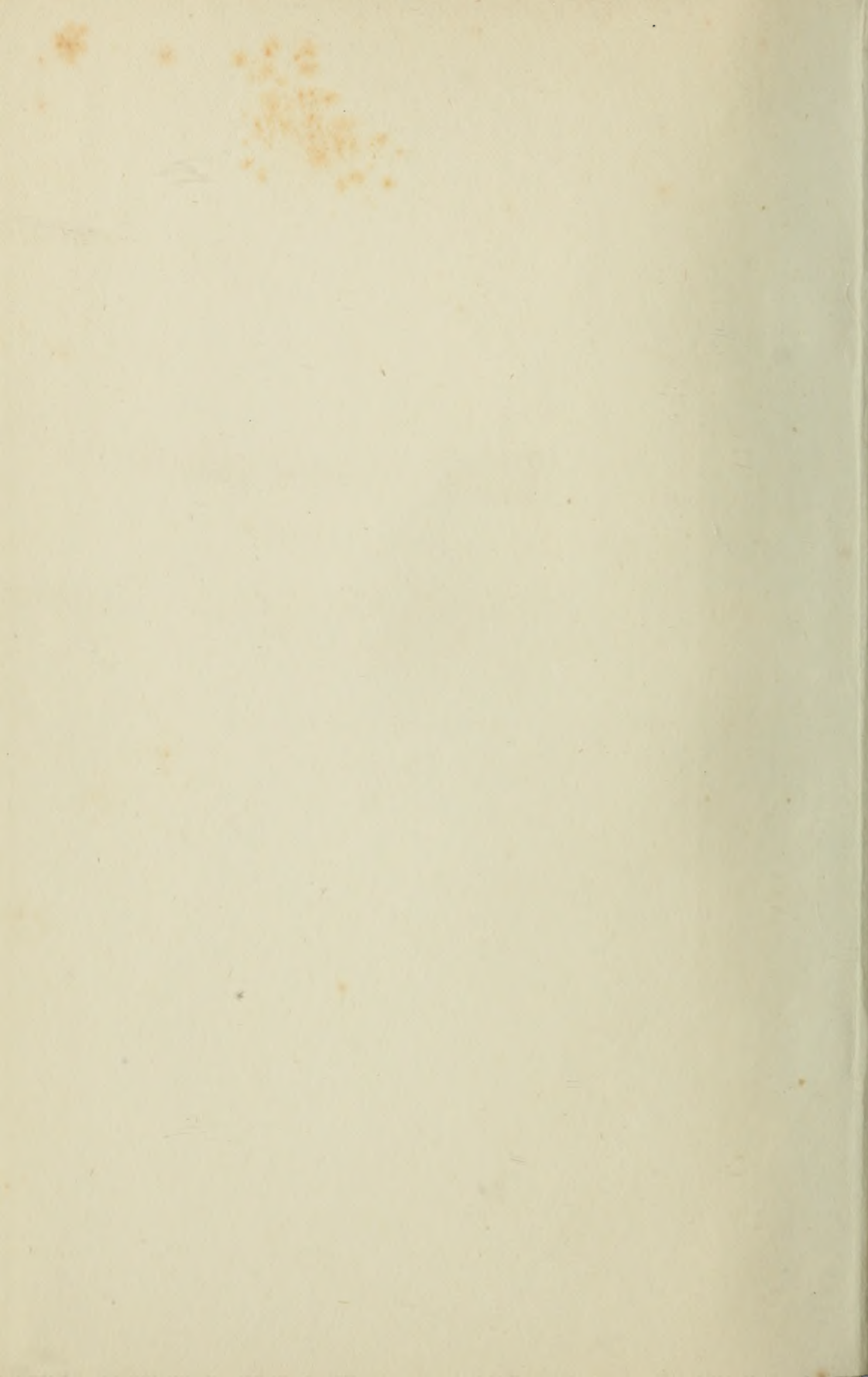
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AT THE SERBIAN FRONT IN
MACEDONIA

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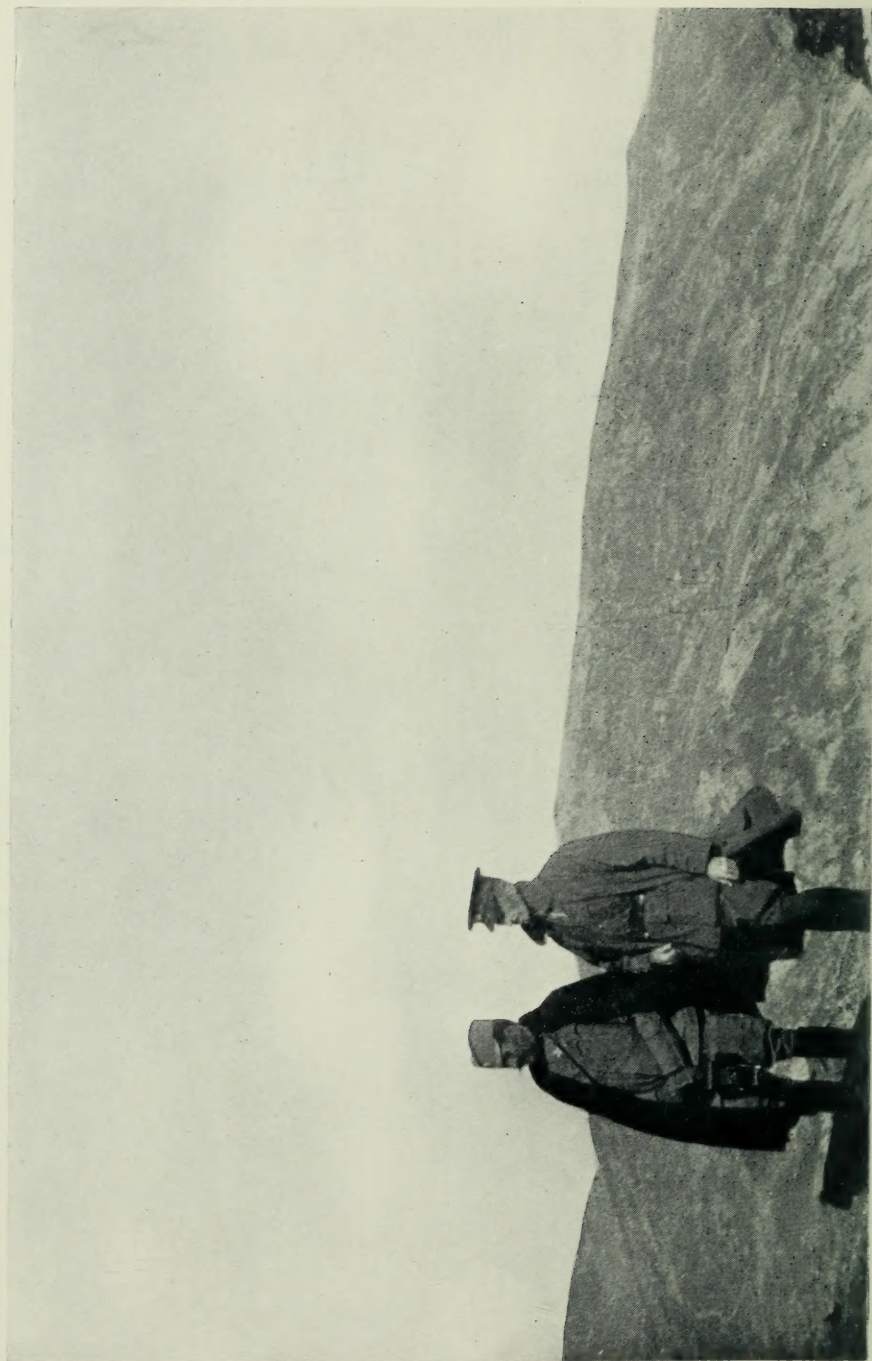
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THE BARREN, STONY SUMMIT OF THE GREAT KAJMAKTCALAN MOUNTAIN—LOOKING TOWARDS THE BULGAR LINES

AT THE SERBIAN FRONT IN MACEDONIA

BY E. P. STEBBING

ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS
BY THE AUTHOR

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WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES, ENGLAND

TO

H.R.H. THE CROWN PRINCE OF SERBIA
AND HIS SOLDIERS

A GALLANT BAND OF BROTHERS WHO ARE FIGHTING
MAGNIFICENTLY AND DOGGEDLY AGAINST
DESPERATE ODDS THIS LITTLE
BOOK IS DEDICATED IN
SYMPATHY AND
ADMIRATION

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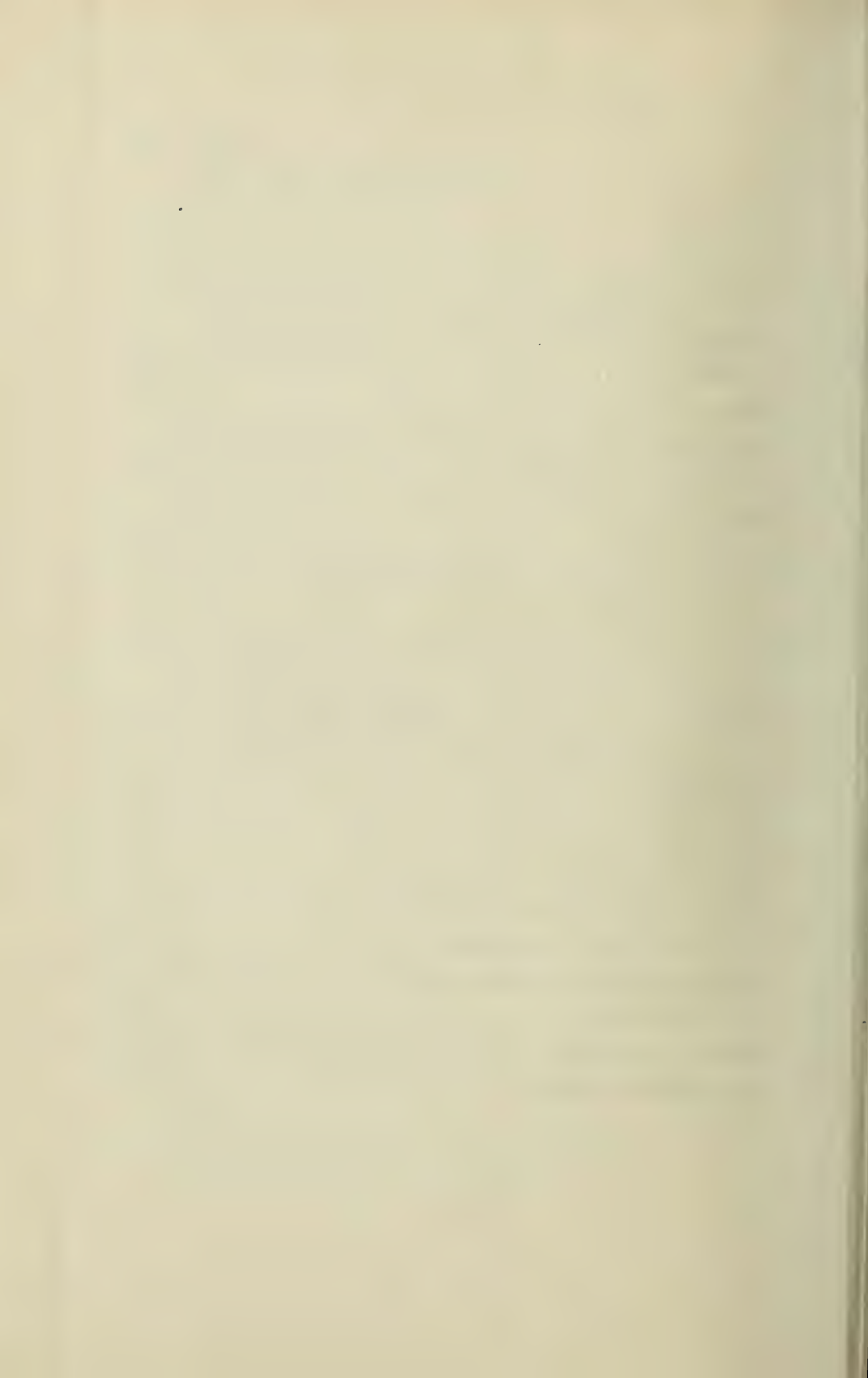
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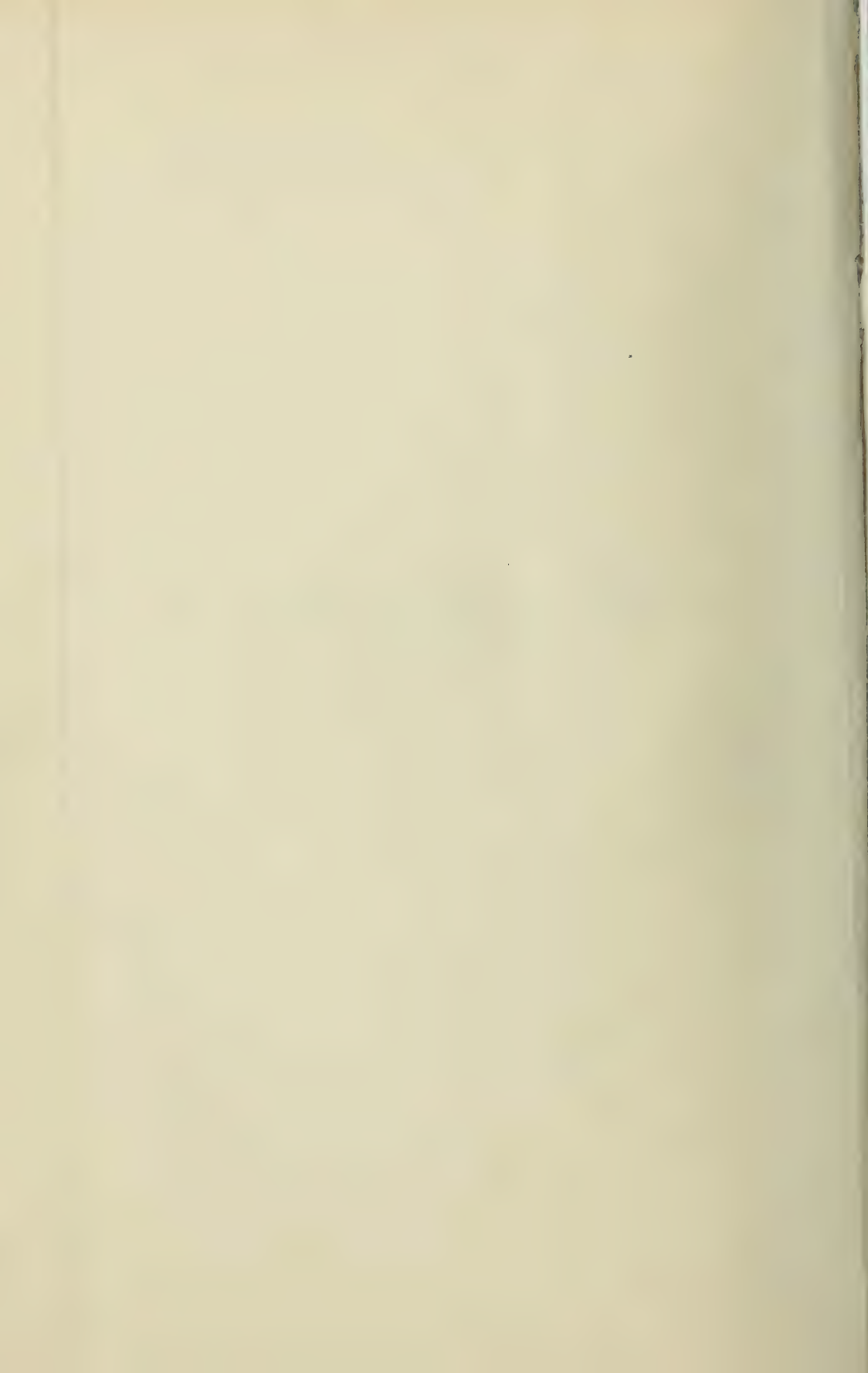
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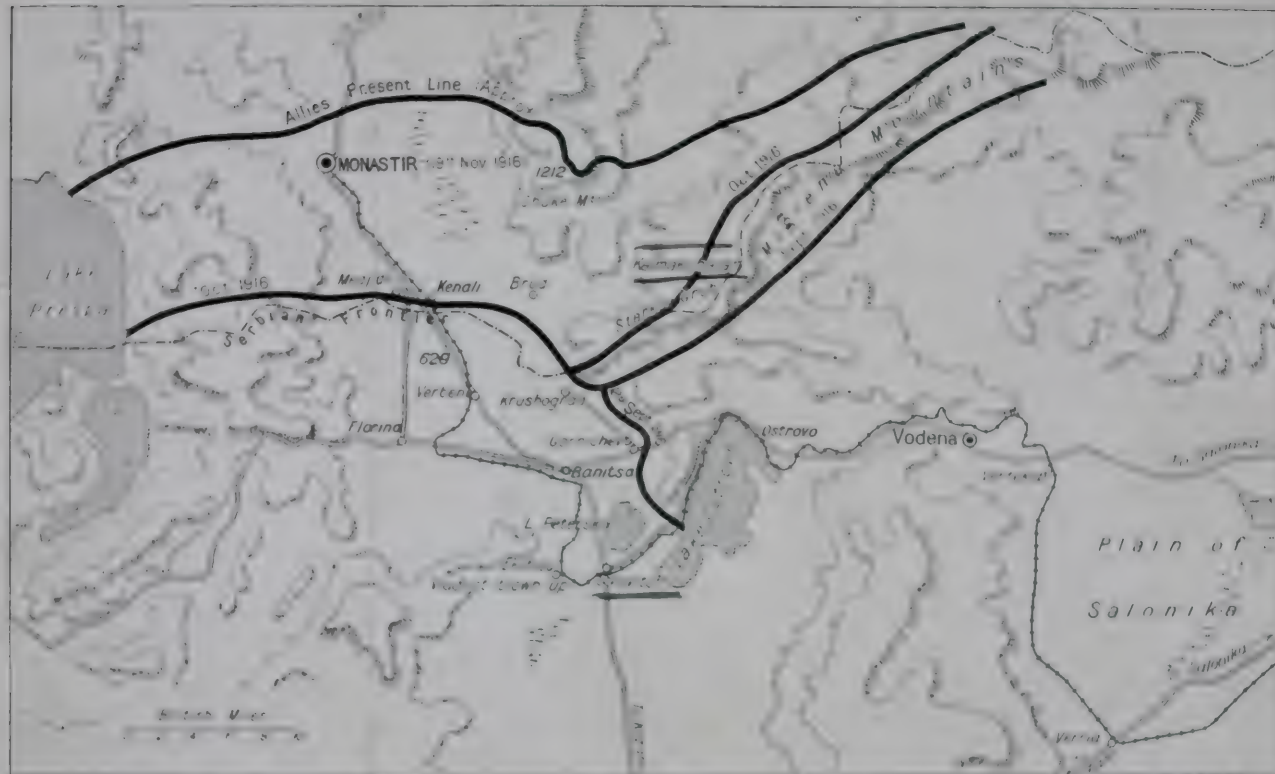
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AT THE SERBIAN FRONT IN
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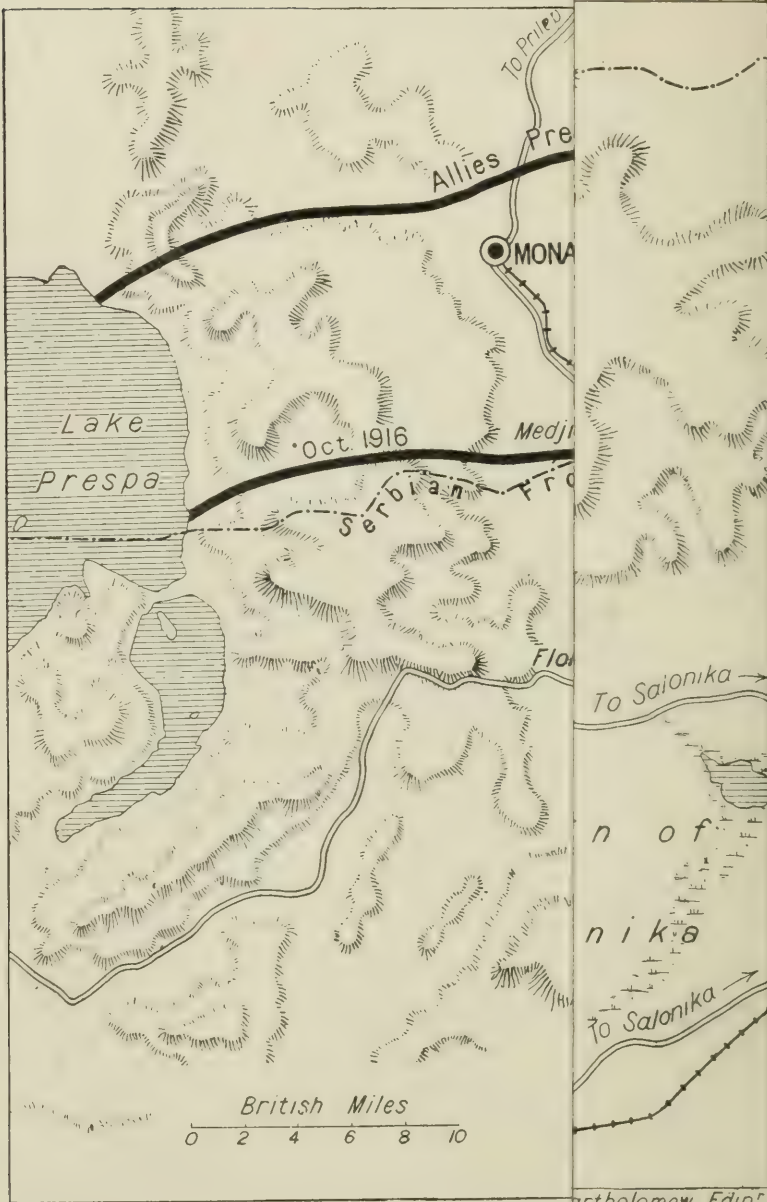


MAP ILLUSTRATING OPERATIONS OF SERBIAN AND FRENCH ARMIES IN MACEDONIA JULY - NOVEMBER 1916



Scale: 1 inch = 10 miles

MAP ILLUSTRATING



AT THE SERBIAN FRONT IN MACEDONIA

CHAPTER I

I JOIN UP

TRANSPORT officer to a unit of the Scottish Women's Hospitals going out to Salonika. This was the job which Dame Fortune flung to me after two weary years spent in attempting to persuade generals, colonels, and even majors, to give me a temporary job on active service during the few months' leisure each year which a post in a University allows one.

The billet thus fortuitously secured proved both novel—very novel for a man in many ways—and attractive. For the fickle goddess took us under her wing; instead of remaining at the base at Salonika, the Women's Hospital went up to the front and remained there or thereabouts. Of this more anon.

The hospital was to be a field one under canvas, and my job was to go out in charge of the equipment, which was being despatched in a transport, endeavour to prevent half the stuff getting stolen whilst being landed at Salonika, of which I gathered on all

sides that the chances would be about 5 to 1 against me, and put up the camp on the site allotted to us. Having spent a number of years in India, and a considerable portion of most of them in camp, the job I considered to be well within my powers (all but the Greek part of it) once I had got the material safe on board, and *bien entendu* provided always a German submarine did not bag us. But of a hospital equipment outside the tents I was woefully ignorant. Some of my instructions on this score were rather alarming. The bales and boxes, etc., were to be sent direct to the docks from the firms supplying the goods by, so far as I could make out, almost every railway line in the country. Moreover they could not be started off until the Admiralty let us know the name of the port and transport fixed upon; and they were to go "goods." I foresaw trouble.

I said good-bye one afternoon in Edinburgh, an extraordinary collection of tools—all loose—being thrust into my arms at the last moment. "To open boxes with—you'll want them, you know." May be, I thought, but I didn't see myself walking down Princes Street with them under my arm—even when wrapped in a piece of brown paper of quite inadequate size to conceal them.

"And you'll be sure not to forget the disinfector and washing machine. They won't be able to do anything without those."—"Quite so, I'll remember; good-bye." But I didn't know—hadn't the foggiest notion what either looked like. I discovered from the lists that one weighed about $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons, and was a hideous piece of machinery by all accounts.

However, I was off and that was all that really mattered. The fun began at the docks. "Just four

days to get everything aboard," was my greeting there ; "the transport leaves at 7 p.m. on the 4th day." And nothing had yet arrived—not even the tents, which were being supplied by a local firm. Space will not permit me, nor would it be of enthralling interest, to detail the perspiring (it was very hot) and strenuous time I spent in the collection of that equipment. I learnt the docks and their ways and methods in war time. I gleaned a lot of knowledge about goods sheds, goods trains and railway management, and I made several hurried, nauseous and haunting diversions into the purlieus—and very dirty and smelly purlieus they were—of that great city in search of the trucks bringing the disinfecter and washing machine—mangle, a corporal of the dockers' battalion told me I should call it : said his mother had one. None of his officers knew anything more of these machines than I did myself.

I lost one, the only, opportunity I had of having a mangle described to me. I was packed in a tram, on a sultry afternoon, in company with a number of fat washerwomen and their babes, on my way to a purlieu. They perspired freely. So great was my discomfort that it was only afterwards that the inspiration came to me that I might have ascertained from them the lines upon which a washing machine was built.

Both these objects were ultimately retrieved. I remember the arrival of the washing machine. The aforesaid little corporal rushed into the A.S.C.'s small office at the dock. "The mangle has come, Sir ; she's come," breathlessly. We hurried out, I wondering why a mangle was of feminine gender. So she had, but even then she was only a "number," for she was decorously veiled in a huge packing case. And the

disinfector arrived later in the same guise. So I was still no wiser on the subject of their looks.

The days had not passed without anxious moments. The first and greatest was when we learnt that a ship's ton differed from the ordinary ton, in fact was a space ton and not a weight ton. Our impedimenta would take nearly double the space tonnage allotted to us in the transport. Only half the equipment could therefore be taken. After some agonizing hours—for if we did not get it off in this transport Heaven only knew when we should go, it being war time—this difficulty was adjusted. But there were others, and not the least was over myself. It came about in this fashion.

There was apparently some difficulty about accommodation. The transport had only room for two officer passengers, as she was purely a cargo ship. She was to go round to another port to take on board M.T. (Mechanical Transport) motor cars and lorries, two officers and thirty men. I apparently was unexpected, as all the hospital personnel were to go out in a hospital ship. It was imperative that I should accompany the equipment in case it was dumped out at Malta, a not unusual fate I was told, or even Alexandria, and there left piled high on a quay till a ship could be found to carry it on to its destination.

In accordance with orders, I reported myself to the Military Embarkation Officer on the morning of my arrival. No orders had been received about me, but I was told that definite instructions had arrived on the subject of the personnel. No woman would be allowed to embark on the transport. Arrangements had already been made for the two men mechanics (motor and X-ray—the only other men besides myself attached

to the unit), who would be quartered on the troop deck.

On the third morning I reported as usual.

"I think," said the Colonel, "that orders regarding this officer have been received."

"Yes, Sir," said his chief of staff. "A telegram has arrived from the War Office." He proceeded to read it out: "Provided the officer in question wears breeches he may proceed in the transport—not otherwise."

A suppressed laugh went round, and even the colonel, a particularly dry individual, found it difficult to keep a straight face.

"Well, Major," said the M.E.O. dryly, "I think"—looking me over—"yes I think we may say that this officer wears breeches; though to be sure," he added, "that don't count for much nowadays"!

In my innocence I thought this settled the matter. Not so. I was to find that the naval embarkation people had the final say in the matter.

I went aboard with my kit some three hours before the transport was to sail, only to be summarily ejected, kit and all. It was done in a breezy fashion by the R.N.R. officer in charge of embarkation. "I told you you could not sail in this ship. No orders received," he said briefly.—"But I have received my orders."—"I've got none from the Admiralty;" and turning to a sailor standing near by he ordered, "Take that gear ashore." Down went my kit, and I, after a moment's thought, dejectedly followed it.

It was a crowded and trying three hours which followed, and the telephone was kept busy, chiefly by my ejector the R.N.R. embarkation officer, whose bark was very much more severe than his bite.

Finally, after delaying the departure of the ship, the necessary permission arrived, and he accompanied me and my kit aboard. The ship's officers, who were taking the greatest interest in my fortunes, were at dinner, and our appearance in the saloon was greeted with a shout of laughter.

CHAPTER II

ON A TRANSPORT TO SALONIKA

“STATIONS” were called, and the officers disappeared as I commenced dinner. That over, I lit a cigar, and went out on deck. The western sky was flaming yellow and the line of hills across the river was darkening. It was a perfect summer evening, with a light, soft air filled with sweet scents blowing off shore.

I suppose every one who has sailed from an English port bound on the Great Adventure has had very similar thoughts to mine as we slowly hauled out from an inner dock to an outer, and then into the main channel. It was not my first voyage east by any manner of means, but how unlike any of its predecessors! As the tugs pulled us slowly through the narrow lock gates and past the last quay, I stood curiously watching the men standing upon it. They appeared, in some indefinable manner, different beings from myself—to be different—as if their world and mine, for the time being, were apart.

We had a glorious run down the coast on the following day to our next port in perfect weather, a yachting trip of the finest, and the warning we picked up to keep a sharp look out for submarines when we arrived at the entrance to the Channel had the semblance of a practical joke. The beautiful English coast bathed in

a flood of sunlight lay so close to us, and the calm smiling sea looked so safe. It seemed incredible that the lurking German submarine could be here. Our curious zig-zagging course, and the outward slung boats, were the only external evidence one had of the actual state of affairs. We got through all right ; but a week later, on our final departure for Salonika, had only dropped ten miles down the channel when we were pulled up at a signal station and spent over forty hours at anchor before we were allowed to proceed. By that time a fleet of ships of all sizes and classes lay at anchor round us, and one's mind went back to the days of convoys in the wars of a century ago. It was some time before the reason of the delay dawned upon us, but when we ascertained that two German submarines were lurking at the mouth of the channel we, the passengers, were far from comfortable. For the draft had come aboard with two subalterns, the junior of whom had much the same experience as my own before he was eventually allowed on the ship. The unforeseen delay produced irritability and restlessness amongst us. Our vote on that first day would have been for going on and chancing it. Anything but this slow wait as the hours dragged wearily along, and we watched the signal station in vain for the string of flags which would set us free. The pilot, a big fat jovial man of the sea of over sixty summers, whom we pestered with questions, held out no hope. " We may sail in five minutes or may be here a week, I've known it so," was all we could get out of him. Our hopes were raised once on the first day. A fussy little launch, a dense column of black smoke from her funnel streaming out behind her, came tearing down channel. Our orders at last, we thought. We watched

her. Would she pass us? No, with a big sweep, she came up on our starboard quarter. An officer climbed on board and went up to the captain's cabin. "Your sailing orders, captain," we heard him say. "We're off." But no. They were the Admiralty sailing directions which every transport receives and must rigidly adhered to. The launch departed, and we remained. At length, late in the afternoon of the second day, sitting in the saloon over a book, I heard a sudden bustle. I ran out on deck, and glanced at the signal station. A string of flags fluttered out from the halyards. It was our release.

An hour or so later we dropped the pilot, after he had wished us luck in a parting glass, and said farewell to England. The captain told us an amusing story anent pilots and their ways. He was dropping an Irish pilot after going down the Shannon once. "You'll come down and have a nip, pilot?" "Sure and thank you, sorr." They adjourned to the cabin, and whiskies and sodas were ordered. The steward came up and whispered in the captain's ear that they had run out of ship's whiskey, and there were only three bottles of some fine old whiskey belonging to the captain himself. The latter was very annoyed, but ordered a bottle to be opened, though he knew what a waste it would be on the pilot, who preferred his drinks strong and raw. The bottle was brought and the captain, anticipating that the pilot would probably take half a tumbler of it, took up the bottle and a glass and saying, "Say when, pilot," poured him out a good strong nip, but not half a tumbler, and without waiting for the pilot to speak filled in some soda and then prepared his own. "There, pilot, that's something you have not had for a long time. That's a fine old whiskey,

sixteen years old." The pilot picked up his glass, held it up to the light, glanced through it and then at it. "Old whiskey is it, sorr; sixteen years old, sorr! and sure it's very sma' for its age!" The captain flushed up, and then burst into a laugh. "Here, help yourself, man, help yourself. You deserve a cask full after that."

Life in a transport in war time proved less monotonous than it is on a liner in the piping days of peace. We had a particularly interesting voyage in spite of not being sent to the bottom.

The transport was a German prize (one of a dozen) captured in Calcutta in August, 1914, whilst on her maiden voyage, and has been doing excellent work for us ever since. Her officers, now in the service of the Indian Government, wore Indian Marine uniform, the crew being lascars—with two A.B.'s to man our gun. The junior of these passed me going aft the first night out. "Good evening, sir," I replied to him, and he then added, "I'm off to do my four hours at keeping the old flag flying." A query elicited the information that he was one of the two gunners who, four hours on and four off, stood by the gun night and day, ready to deal with submarines. Pretty stiff work.

The ship, His Majesty's prize ship *Fraulein*, we will call her, was a fine one, only completed in March, 1914, some 14,000 tons, with great beam and, consequently great cargo capacity and fine, almost luxurious, officers' quarters. She had not been touched nor had her name been altered (a thousand pities, I think, to change the name of a prize ship). The names of the various cabins, etc., were all in German, and it sounded queer to read over the saloon "Speisezimmer für offiziere," and so on.

But the chief source of pride to the officers was the

chart room, beautifully fitted, large, with a fine nautical library, excellent charts and, according to them, the last word in what a merchant vessel's chart-room should be. Certainly even to the eye of the landsman the Germans appear to know how to build cargo boats.

She had put into Bordeaux a few weeks previously, owing to some breakdown, and the French people had swarmed down daily to see her, feasting their eyes on the first German prize ship they had seen. The ship, the captain said, created quite a furore whilst she was there.

His lascar crew, however, used the opportunity quite differently. They considered they had a grievance over their food, and presented the British Consul with the following petition. The Consul, having no acquaintance with the East or the ways of lascars, failed to make head or tail of it, and so made it over to the captain. The petition is a gem in its way :—

“ Jusaf Kan, Sarang,
 “ Rasulban, Sarang,
 “ H.M. Prize Ship ———.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I am pray to you for I was very sad why not Captin give mi very torbol * he never give mi anny spices two monte † and never give mi Butter one monte all everything sometime give sometime not four monte gone and we are very tears cannot work and all everything sometime give and sometime not and we are very poor man.”

But the French were not the only people to show satisfaction at this prize. A fat washerwoman, with the usual friend and baby, after delivering her goods,

* Trouble.

† Month.

was standing looking at the ship in the dock one afternoon as we passed by. Said she, "It is a damned good job she is there, and I only wish she was chock full of Germans, so I does. Why don't you fill her up, mister?" This with a fat chuckle to my companion, an officer of the Docker's Battalion, who appeared not a little scandalised at being addressed in this familiar fashion. I smiled broadly. She was so fat and genial and comfortable, and so evidently meant it.

The officers were a fine lot, good seamen and genial and courteous companions. The captain and chief officer, men in their prime; the second officer an old P. & O. officer of over sixty, a "dug out" as he expressed it who had quitted the sea twenty years before and settled ashore, but had turned out at his country's call.

And how those men worked—had to work! Double watches were kept—two officers always on the bridge, four hours on and four off, through the twenty-four—there were only four of them, including the captain, with, in addition, a purser and a wireless operator. No eight hours a day about their work.

I wonder if we really realise at home what the Merchant Service is doing for us all in this war! After leaving England the senior officers never had their clothes off nor a good night's rest in their bunks till they reached Salonika thirteen days later. As one of the officers said one night up on the bridge (the captain had given us the run of the ship, including the inestimable privilege of the bridges): "This war is not only being won in the trenches, but also on the bridges of the ships of the mercantile fleet." He never spoke a truer word. To the landsman it is little short of marvellous to watch

the way these men proceed day after day, sailing through known danger zones, carrying their lives in their hands. A submarine may be lurking anywhere. Whether they keep far out or close to the shore of a neutral or allied country, safety cannot be guaranteed by the watchers on the fleets. Efficient and constant vigilance, luck, and good seamanship are all essential to the completion of a single voyage, and in many cases all this care is ended by an enemy torpedo.

An hour spent on the bridge with the officers of the watch soon convinces one of the arduous work of the seamen nowadays. Night and day, whilst in dangerous waters, the sea has to be constantly swept. All vessels are narrowly scrutinised, and the officer of the watch has to determine whether to alter the course, and give suspicious looking vessels a wider berth. When the sea is choppy with white horses, the strain becomes greater, as the churned water made and left in the wake of a ship renders the picking up of a submarine a very difficult matter. And most of the merchant vessels are undermanned in officers. Added to this there is the thought ever present at the back of the mind that a mine may send them to the bottom at any moment.

We always ran at night without lights, and yet we met ships ablaze. Some captains won't take the risk of being run down. And it is a great risk. We were nearly run into twice and only fine seamanship saved us in the nick of time on both occasions. A sailor fears collision even more than a submarine, and so many carry mast lights which can be seen at a considerable distance, even from the low level of a submarine. A collision is followed by a court martial or, in the case of a privately owned ship, often by the loss of his job or

the endorsement of the captain's certificate. They are hard times for the merchant skippers these days. All the greater honour to them that they stick it out, and thus play so large a part in helping the Empire to win the war. Without them we should crumble up in a few weeks.

Discussing submarines one night at dinner the Thames bargeman who had sunk one came up. The officers had not heard of his triumphal progress up the Thames after the event. "They are a race apart, these Thames bargemen," said the captain, and told us the following amusing yarn. A barge somewhere near the mouth of the Thames got out of hand in the strong tide running and swung into an anchored cruiser, grinding along her side and taking off her paint. A lieutenant on the bridge looked over the side and said, "Now, my man. Can't you do better than that? You're taking off my paint." The lieutenant was apparently a very mild-tempered specimen of his race, but even he put it a little stronger than that. Said the master of the barge, looking up, "Hello, mister, and who're you?" "I am lieutenant in charge of this ship, my man." "Oh, you h'are h'are you? Well, mister, I'm capting of this 'ere boat. If you 'as anythin' to say you go and tell it to your equal, my mate—'im forrard there, what 'as 'is shirt 'anging down over his trousers be'ind!"

A voyage on board a transport, especially a cargo transport such as the *Fraulein*, has not much resemblance to one on a luxurious liner. True, we were lucky as the captain kept a very good table and had some first-class wine on board. But there were no frills, no marble baths and hot-water taps; sanitary arrangements, being German, were none too good. No snowy



READY FOR GERMAN SUBMARINES—THE GUN ON BOARD THE TRANSPORT



THE BRITISH (ON THE SOLDIER) AND GERMAN (ON THE SAILOR) PATTERN OF LIFE BELT PROPERLY ADJUSTED. THE GERMAN PATTERN IS SEEN TO FIT MORE CLOSELY TO THE BODY, A PILE OF LIFE BELTS IS SEEN ON THE HATCH TO RIGHT. THEY REMAINED IN THIS POSITION THROUGHOUT THE VOYAGE

decks and easy lounges, and, added to this absence of luxury, was the necessity of closing up all lighted cabins after dark. And this in the summer in the Mediterranean was no joke. There was no fan in our cabin or in the saloon, and for coolness' sake the long evenings (we dined ship-fashion at 6.30) had to be spent doing nothing on deck, since reading in a hermetically sealed cabin was an impossibility. I passed my evenings on the upper bridge keeping a look-out for submarines. We had a fine moon with us all through the Mediterranean. Beautiful as those nights were, we had magnificent weather the whole way, the officers grumbled sorely at the moon as it intensified the submarine danger, it being next to impossible to pick up a periscope in the area of sea flooded with the radiance of the moon. Anxious nights were passed upon that bridge—to me, a landsman with no responsibility, they were fascinating.

Boat stations had been fixed before we dropped the last pilot, we three officers having charge of a boat apiece, or rather of the soldiers allotted to it. Boat stations were called several times, and getting into a life waistcoat brought the actual position rather vividly to the imagination. I remember that the sight of the naval gunner going to his watch on the gun wearing a lifebelt, just after we dropped the pilot in the Channel, was rather startling. The lifebelts, the British pattern, left much to be desired. We had two kinds on board. The British is made of wads of flat cork sewn into a canvas covering in separate compartments, all belts being of a size, so that they really only fitted a big man ; for smaller men the ends have to overlap. This overlapping means that it is very difficult to tie the belt on tightly, and if not tight to the body it works up to the

mouth and drowns its wearer ; or if the tape round the neck is too long, and it will lengthen when it gets wet, the belt slips down over the legs and hampers the man or turns him upside down. In the crowded leave-boat in which I crossed from France I doubt whether 5 per cent. of the belts were put on in such a manner as to have proved serviceable had their owners suddenly found themselves in the sea.* The German pattern we had aboard is a better one, though experts probably hold that this is not the last word in this important matter. The compartments in these are filled with cotton wool, their covering being a fine brown canvas. Being of wool they fit much closer to the body, as the photograph depicts, and so are not so liable to slip. This belt is said to keep a man weighing 38 lbs. (the average weight in water) afloat for 36 hours. Of course the new life waistcoats are good, but their cost puts them out of court for general use aboard ship.

The voyage through the Bay was uneventful. Beyond being picked up by a British destroyer or two there was no excitement save off Cape Finisterre one evening, when from the upper bridge the captain saw, to his indignation, a broad beam of light issuing from the troop deck. Some repair work was being done by the engineers ! But why at night ? No answer was forthcoming. The captain was furious. It is positively extraordinary how careless or callous people become on this subject of lights if it interferes with their momentary comfort. The captain said that every voyage there would be surely one or more instances of it. On one voyage

* Since this was written I have crossed to France and back again. The new pattern now in use on the Channel boats is an immense improvement on the old. But I do not think it comes up to the German belt.

early in the war he was on a transport carrying 3000 troops. She was a big passenger steamer with rows of portholes in her sides. They were in the Red Sea, and at that stage it was a danger zone, the whereabouts of the Germans being still unknown, all not having been rounded up at that time. Late at night, in his watch he looked aft from the bridge and there lay a broad beam of light issuing from one of the portholes amidships. "Enough to give us away a dozen times over." In a ship of that size it was impossible to say from which porthole the light was coming, and a long search failed to detect the delinquent, the light being suddenly put out when the search started below. Three thousand lives endangered, through the carelessness and selfishness of one person. "I'd have triced him up and given him a dozen if I had caught him and had had my way," said the captain. "We'll reach Gibraltar during the night and will have to turn and run back a bit," the captain announced a couple of days later. "We are not allowed to go in at night time now, and we can't hang round or we'll get a torpedo." I was up on the bridge doing an hour's submarine searching. I heard a yarn that morning so illustrative of our red tape. A ship received orders to proceed to Port Said, take in a lot of water and carry it to Aden. On arrival at Port Said the captain went ashore and reported himself. "What are you here for?" "Have to take in water for Aden, Sir." "We've no water for you here. You had better proceed to Aden." "Very good, Sir. Will you give me that in writing?" The document was duly forthcoming, and the ship proceeded to Aden. When off that place she was signalled, "Proceed on your voyage." The captain, taken back, signalled, "Where?" "Haven't you got orders?"

“No.” The next signal appeared. “Captain to come ashore and report.” On arrival, “Well, captain, what on earth do you mean? Don’t you know where you are going?” The captain stated his case. “Well, don’t you know at all where you may be bound for?” “I have private advices that we are to go to Calcutta.” “Private advices! What’s that?” The captain mentioned the name of the firm who were running things for the Government. “Never heard of ’em.” “But, Sir, they are working these ships for Government.” “Don’t know anything about that. You will wait here for orders.” And they spent two days at Aden doing nothing, and were then ordered to proceed to Calcutta!

I was in the captain’s cabin that night before turning in. This is how his native steward arranges his table nightly for possible emergencies. A huge night muffler plus a silk handkerchief are flanked by a revolver and two packets of cartridges. Hard by are four large packets of rifle cartridges, a hundred rounds, with rifle hanging handy in their neighbourhood. Next to the cartridges is the lifebuoy waistcoat, and close to it a long double-breasted overcoat. On the corner of the table is the smoking outfit. This array having been placed out each night in exactly the same order, the steward retires to sleep the sleep of the just, confident that his master is provided with the wherewithal to tackle German submarines. A hundred rifle and fifty revolver cartridges for a man who would probably be far too busy to fire one was no bad armament!

All are not thus prepared. We passed a sister ship to-day, and her 4·7” gun aft was tightly cased up in tarpaulins. If a submarine had suddenly appeared she’d have gone to the bottom before her gun could have been

brought into play. Truly, some skippers are queer fish. At the time we were giving a wide berth to a wind jammer. Harmless as they look, they are one of the dangers of the seas at present. It is a favourite device of the German submarine captains, or was as long as it paid them, to lie alongside one, put a couple of men with rifles aboard to overawe the crew, and then lie in wait till an unsuspecting steamer came along within reach, sally out and torpedo her. Passing Cape Sparta we heard that one of the largest of the captured German Calcutta ships was lost here afterwards. She was a huge cargo boat, but had been built for conversion into a raider. Her bitts were fitted for machine guns, the caps screwing off. Aft round the winches she had emplacements for 6-inch guns, with racks for rifles, an ammunition magazine, and so on. She was condemned at once, and never taken into a prize court.

It is perhaps needless to say that no ships save hospital ships follow the ordinary Mediterranean route of peace time. Certainly I saw more of the Mediterranean on this voyage than any of my others have shown me. I naturally do not propose to describe our route. We altered our course from time to time, according to sealed instructions with the captain, zig-zagged about on occasions when in notoriously dangerous parts. I remember one morning. We were close to land, and for an hour before breakfast a great argument waged as to whether there was a submarine inshore of us and keeping pace with us. The argument was never settled. The chief engineer, a cautious Glasgow man, maintained he was right and we thought we had made it out; but the ship's officers would say nothing definite.

One of the numerous dodges of the German submarines is to cover the periscope with a cask, empty provision box or fish hamper, a hole being cut in one side to allow of vision. They then move gently on with the current, and await the approach of an unsuspecting steamer. In one instance one thus disguised was spotted by a ship's captain proceeding *against* the current. The captain quickly changed his course and sheered off, leaving the German submarine commander to learn to do better at his next effort.

Before we reached Salonika we picked up a wireless, telling us that a ship had been sunk off Cape Bon just twenty-four hours after we had passed.

We had seen something of the appalling delays which took place in unloading and loading ships ourselves, and were to see more on arrival, and the yarns going round amongst the men whose calling is on the sea are innumerable and almost incredible, were not our blundering methods in war time, before we get into our stride, so well known to us all. Each port fought against the others at first, endeavoured to undo what the other had done, and considered itself the only one on earth. For instance, a certain ship was ordered to be fitted for camels at A. She took in 800 tons of sand, had the necessary fittings put in, and took the camels aboard and was ready to proceed. An inquiry about the ship was received from B. "Loaded up with camels, Sir, and ready to proceed," was the answer. "Camels, camels; who said camels? Have 'em taken out at once and ship sent here." The camels were unloaded and ship proceeded to B, and reported arrival. "What ship? How is she fitted?" "Fitted for camels at A, Sir." "At where?" "A." "Oh, damn! Bullocks, she's

required for bullocks. Fit her up." She was fitted with bullock stalls, and then sent out to wait in the harbour. No bullocks had arrived. A day or two elapsed. Said H.Q., "What's the —— doing? Where is she?" "Out in the harbour, Sir, fitted for bullocks and waiting their arrival." "Bullocks, bullocks; we've no bullocks. What the devil is she fitted for bullocks for? She ought to have been fitted for horses. It's horses we want a ship for." Now the bullock fittings were for large bulls. They would be too large for horses. They were torn out of the ship, horse fittings put in, and at last she really did get away with a load of horses! This is only one of many stories going the round. I heard others even worse, if that is possible. But we've cleared out the Augean stable of incompetency now. It was inevitable at first, caught as we and our Allies were, unprepared. The following story is more amusing. A certain German ship lying at a British port was seized at the outbreak of war. Orders arrived from a senior officer at another port that the ship was to be sent there immediately with all her cargo. It was known at both ports, these things leak out so quickly, that she had a large amount of fine German bottled lager beer aboard. The senior port was anxious to get hold of this. The junior port had, however, strong doubts, or pretended to have, as to whether the beer would ever arrive at the other place, and so unloaded the lot before despatching the ship. The senior port, licking its lips at the thought of iced lager (it was the hot-weather season), went on board the ship on arrival, and ordered the beer to be at once sent ashore. The disappointment was severe; also the language of the telegrams dispatched to the junior port on the subject was scarcely official. But

the latter place, solacing itself with iced beer, was able to bear with equanimity the sulphurous heat of the telegraphic correspondence.

Of course we have no ship's bells, bugles or dressing bells nowadays. All these frills have been stopped, and we sneak along without advertising our presence. When we ran into a wall of fog, for instance, as we did on several nights, although some ships in the neighbourhood—neutrals perhaps—loosed off whistles, not so the *Fraulein*. Her somewhat raucous voice could have been heard for miles, and she kept demurely silent and trusted to chance coupled with skill to protect her. But the days were gorgeous—ideal Mediterranean yachting weather. Leaning over the taffrail one afternoon with the old second officer he said, *a propos* of nothing, his best stories came out like that: "Did I tell you the yarn of the London cabby in the days before the taxi? I drove down to Fenchurch Street in a growler. I had a uniform case with me, but was not going to sea, and was in mufti. I paid the man on arrival. He took the coin, looked first at it and then at me in cabby's well-known disparaging way, as if I'd given him a penny. I knew I had overpaid the man, but I turned to a railway official and asked him what the fare was, mentioning the place I had come from. His reply proved me correct. I was turning away when the cabby spoke. I looked round. He had bent down and with a hand to his mouth was leering down at me. 'I say, mister, I hope your — ship gets sunk.'"

I heard many amusing yarns about the difficulties which confronted the Government of India in finding officers to man the German prizes they captured at the outbreak of war. To some extent the exploits of the

Emden helped them, as the services of officers from sunk ships were available. But they got some queer customers from the tramps. In one case the command of one of the ships was offered to a very rough diamond, a Yorkshire man who had never been in anything but a tramp all his life. Ships' officers in tramps do not have personal stewards to look after them. He now became an Indian Marine officer. Meeting a brother officer of that service soon after, the latter asked him how he liked his new ship. "Why, mon, I likes her fine in some ways, but they've given me a blooming valet." "Oh yes, Indian Marine officers always have a native servant." "Well, mon, I've got no use for 'im. I like my cabin to myself. Why the first day he wanted to put on my blooming trousers for me!"

To the joy of all on board we got past Malta without being called in. "Proceed," was the laconic answer to our wireless message, reporting ourselves. This meant a saving of at least twenty-four hours, as all ships must make the entrance to the Grecian Archipelago after dark, owing to the great danger from lurking submarines. There is one small red light at the entrance which can only be picked up in clear weather at about seven miles. If misty, you are on it before you know where you are. The captain said it is like the Irish lights, which used to be known in nautical phraseology as "two darks and a dim." In this connection he told an amusing experience of his own whilst a youngster on a voyage to the Irish coast in a small vessel, of the genus tramp I imagine. He was on the bridge, the ship proceeding dead slow, when he suddenly saw a light alongside. He shouted some unprintable language through a megaphone as he sheered off. He guessed it was the lightship

he had been on the look-out for. An injured voice, also through a megaphone, came back, "What the —— are you in such a hell of a hurry? Can't you give us time to trim her?" The Irish idea of unshipping the light of a lightship in the middle of the night to trim it was too much for the youngster and left him speechless.

We entered on the most dangerous part of the journey this night, after doing a lot of zig-zagging during the day. The reason for zig-zagging is due to the fact that submarines—enemy submarines—lie below the surface at a safe distance in the tracks taken by ships, and can see them perfectly as they pass over them. They then rise and follow in the wake of the ship, which they can also see without coming to the surface, until near enough to discharge a torpedo. Zig-zagging upsets this little manœuvre.

I think we had all got used to the idea of submarines by now, save perhaps some of the Tommies, and were not particularly nervous. As regards the Tommies, I happened to make some light remark to one of the A.B.'s that now perhaps he'd get his wish and have a shot at a German submarine, which I knew from several conversations with him he was dying to do. A Tommy standing by ejaculated, "My Gawd, sir, I hope we shan't see any!" There was one scare that night. The ship had just made a big curve, and looking back at the wake in the moonlight the captain felt sure he saw a periscope. He was about to give the alarm to the gunner, when a second look convinced him and the officer with him that it was only the play of the tricky moonlight on the curving wake. And so it apparently turned out; but the incident is worth mentioning as it shows what a

constant strain, minute by minute, the bridge officers have to go through nowadays.

We had not been left unattended up to now, but it was nothing to the interest the fair *Fraulein* aroused in the navies of France and England as she plodded her way through the Greek Islands. She was overwhelmed with attentions by which I fear she was in no wise flattered, callous maiden that she was. This morning we were picked up in a dangerous stretch between two islands by two small cockle-shells flying the French flag. Patrol boats they called themselves, each armed with a gun in the bows and aft half as long as themselves. They steamed on either quarter and dropped us as soon as we got through the channel, and turned their attention to two homeward-bound ships. About lunch time we reached a wider channel, and were picked up by a British destroyer and a three-funnelled sloop, and they escorted us through. The Turks had apparently been sowing mines about here recently, and we had been told to keep our eyes open. I confess I did not like this bit of information. An ungentlemanly thing a mine. Does not give one time to look about one. The sloop dropped us without a farewell as soon as we got through the channel, but the cocky little destroyer stuck to us, dropping from the port bow to port quarter. She was quite close, one could have flicked a biscuit on to her deck, but the *Fraulein*, stolidly and sturdily ploughing her way along, took no notice of her polite attentions. At a certain point the *Fraulein* altered her course, as per sailing instructions, but her spick and span little escort took no notice until it looked as if we should run her down, when she starboarded her helm. She didn't forget the incident, for some while after she signalled us to keep our

course, and roused the *Fraulein* somewhat this time. She didn't like being treated as a poor country cousin by her fine-feathered little town relation; but she ported her helm obediently. The escort left us after dinner, but with no kiss of adieu. The landsmen felt as if they were parting with safety on her departure.

But it was not for many hours apparently. As I turned in my last thoughts were uncomfortable ones on the subject of mines. The next morning at nine a.m. we entered Salonika harbour. We had been escorted throughout the night, surrounded in fact, by trawlers, mine-sweepers, and destroyers, and a destroyer took us in. Having got us thus far, they did not want to lose us. Others had gone even at the twelfth hour, and they were careful. As I looked out at six we appeared to be in the midst of a fishing fleet. It looked like peace time. They were fishing right enough, but it was for mines.

As we steamed slowly up the harbour the boats were slung in, after thirteen days slung outwards. The voyage was over.

CHAPTER III

SALONIKA, AUGUST, 1916

WE had dropped anchor between the British Admiral's flagship and a hospital ship. The latter turned out to be the vessel which had brought out the personnel of the Scottish Women's hospital, as also that of one of the R.A.M.C. hospitals of 1000 beds provided by the British Government for the Serbians. Steaming with lights ablaze and surrounded with all the luxury of a first-class liner, they had had a giddy time of it on the way out.

I went across to her in the afternoon and met Mrs. Harley, who had brought out another S.W.H. unit, a transport column of motor ambulances also for the Serbians, Miss Jack, the Administrator of our unit, and one of the doctors, Dr. Lewis. Half the unit had left the ship for a temporary camp out at Mikra Bay, to the east of Salonika. But the best and quite unexpected item of news announced to me was that the unit was to go up to the Serbian front to a place called Ostrovo in the mountains, instead of remaining at the base at Salonika. Dr. Bennett and the Sanitary Officer, Miss Gordon, had already gone up with the Chief of the Serbian Medical Service, Colonel Sondermeyer, to settle upon the site of the camp. It was difficult to credit our luck at this piece of news, and I returned to the *Fraulein* to make

the other men envious. Poor old *Fraulein*—I regret to say I was horribly shocked at her very humble and dirty appearance when I looked across at her from the snowy decks of the luxurious hospital liner. Government have no time or money to waste on painting up their transports, and her skirts, I mean her sides, so much needed freshening up. I found myself apologising for her appearance, though I was ashamed to be doing so as she had had my whole affections for so long.

That night the flagship had a show on board and the sound of the soft strains of the ship's band playing seductive waltzes and the distant sight of girls' shimmering drapery 'neath the electric lights drove several of us wild with envy—none more so than the junior sub. Some of our unit were enjoying themselves there, the last frolic they were to have for many a day. With the wide circle of lights gleaming on the Salonika front and up the hill at the back, the maddening music and the softness of the Mediterranean air—it was a most voluptuous evening. The more so perhaps because war and wounds and death were the present mission of us all. I fell asleep to the haunting strains of that band, to be awakened later by a very different melody, to wit the well-known and almost forgotten "ping ping" of the mosquito fiend. I got very little sleep the remainder of that night, for they were fierce and hungry these Ægean mosquitoes. My complaints at breakfast next morning met with scant sympathy, but elicited one of the most amusing mosquito yarns I have heard.

An Irish crew occupied the fo'castle of a ship newly arrived in the East. They were greatly pestered by mosquitoes the first night. Driven beyond endurance the crew rose as one man and by various devices cleared

the fo'castle of their tormentors and then went to sleep again. One man more bitten than the rest lay awake in the dark and after a time saw two fireflies approaching him. Jumping up he shouted to his messmates, "Eh, mates, wake up, wake up. Begorra! Damned if the blinkin divils are not coming back with lanterns!"

Breakfast over we turned our backs on our late lotus-eating existence.

The captain took the senior subaltern and myself ashore in his gig. We disembarked at the chief landing stage on the front and found ourselves at once in the midst of a thronging crowd of many nationalities all attired for the business of war, moving in the midst of the indescribably brilliant setting of a Mediterranean city, European in character, but with an Eastern touch given by the numerous slender minarets gleaming dazzling white in the hot sunlight against the dark background of the hills. The intense light and colouring of the scene beggars description.

According to orders I reported at French G.H.Q. I had been warned to expect difficulties and I found them at the outset. The pressure in all the war departments at this period was tremendous. Reinforcements were pouring into Salonika in preparation for an Allied offensive against the Bulgars. The first of some Russian brigades which were intended to reinforce the French wing had arrived a day or two before. The first regiments of two Italian divisions which were to reinforce the eastern wing in the neighbourhood of the British were being landed. Two large Rubertino liners had come in soon after dawn this morning, passing close to us, their decks packed with troops who cheered enthusiastically as they steamed slowly by—cheers which we returned. Whilst

I was in the French Medical H.Q. the sounds of bands striking up hard by were suddenly heard. Major Julia, with his nation's love of military display, jumped up, opened the green venetians, closed to keep out the great heat and glare, and adjourned to the balcony. In the short, wide street below, running between two great blocks of fine buildings all occupied by the French G.H.Q., General Sarraill stood waiting to receive the Italian regiments and take the salute. Round the corner came a French band followed by a column of small wiry men in green-blue service kit and trench helmets with a very narrow brim—too narrow to afford adequate protection against shrapnel was the general verdict. The officers carried rifles instead of swords. The men swung by at a smart pace and looked a serviceable lot.

As a result of my interview with the French officers, whom I got to know well later, and who were most courteous, I understood that the French had their hands full at present with landing the Italians and their impedimenta, and that no labour would be available for landing my equipment. The ship was to come into a quay the next day to unload the lorries and cars and would then be sent out into the bay to wait till there was room for her to come in again to unload the rest of the cargo. The captain had warned me that this would be the course followed, and expected to be anchored out in the bay for ten days or more before he got in again.

I was then taken off by the French *liaison* officer to report to the Serbian Medical H.Q. In order to make our position intelligible I should say that we were attached to the Serbian Army, but that the Serbs took their orders from the French, General Sarraill being in supreme command in Macedonia, and were dependent on the French

entirely for railway transport, and so on. And the French had their hands more than full. At the Serbian H.Q., I found several extremely nice Serbian officers of the Staff, Colonel Sondermeyer, the chief, being absent with Dr. Bennett, our C.M.O., up country, as already mentioned. After some talk, French being of course the medium, it was agreed that I should go and see the French Embarkation Officer in charge of the railway business at the docks. It was now nearing twelve. No work is done between twelve and three, when the heat is reminiscent of the early part of the hot weather in India, and I returned to the centre of the town and made my first acquaintance with that great meeting place of the armies of Macedonia, Flocca's, which has by now achieved almost world-wide fame. And it merits it. Picture a short length of broad street with vile *pavé* giving off from the "front." On either side cafés, their little tables and chairs spreading across the pavement on either side far out into the street, leaving only a fairway some four yards wide for pedestrians. During the café hours all vehicular traffic was prohibited in this length. Imagine each little table surrounded by three to five chairs, and all the chairs, many hundreds of them, filled with the fighting men of a dozen or more nationalities—fighting men at their ease, enjoying the period of relaxation, drinking an infinite variety of drinks, smoking cigarettes for the most part, and talking shop or discussing the latest *prima donna* (save the mark) at the *café chantants*, at the Tour Blanche or Bristol. Fill the narrow fairway with a throng of officers and soldiers moving slowly up and down, friends suddenly meeting, hailing each other with the warmth of the soldier on active service and blocking the fairway or promptly

hunting for a couple of chairs (and drinks) to hear each the other's tale. That is the *coup d'œil* Venizelos Street would have presented to you at any time between 11.30 and 2 or again from 4.30 to 7 or 8 p.m. in August, 1916. And those who saw it and lived the life of it for a week or two, are never likely to forget that wonderful kaleidoscopic picture. And the most brilliant café of the lot was Flocca's, chosen who knows by what chance as *par excellence* the officers' café, and prosperous with a sudden prosperity which only war can bring to its fortunate ones. For the soldier in war-time is ever prodigal, the duration of life being so problematical, and most prodigal of them all I fear were the British. To sit at Flocca's for an hour or two was an education in itself, and few of those there, very few, could have accurately described the nationality and uniforms of the many hundreds of warriors gathered festively around those little tables. French, Russians and Cossacks, Italians, British, Serbian, French colonials, Sinégalese, Zouaves, and men from Madagascar—Indians, Annamese, Albanians, Macedonians and Greeks, all (with the exception of the Greeks, who kept and were left severely to themselves) fraternised together in one great community of brotherhood, bound by the identity of their present interests, the great adventure of war. And if it proved difficult to pick out the nationalities of the fighting races as they mingled before one, as difficult was it to distinguish with any certainty the uniforms of many of what I may call the obscurer nationalities. The main types were of course easily distinguishable—Russian infantry of the line and Cossack; French of all arms, though their headgear differed amazingly, from the ordinary képi through stages of the old glengarry of our

infantry to a tam o' shanter. Italians in their service kit varied but little and were one of almost the only nationalities who wore no khaki. For units or individuals of all the other services were to be seen in khaki of varying shades and thicknesses ; the officers either having the roll collar of the British or buttoning up to the neck in our old fashion and adorned of course with their own national regimental badges. This khaki uniform more particularly applied to units of armies we had been clothing. Serbians wore chiefly khaki or the blue-grey of the French, but even here both officers and men would be seen wearing their old more gaudy uniforms saved from the retreat of the preceding year. In fact it was this clinging to their old uniforms of peace days or such portions of them as they still possessed, whether tunics or breeches, even when they had to be supplemented by khaki for the remainder, made for the brightness of the scene. That street was like a great stage. There goes a Russian private in khaki overall, buttonless and caught in at waist with a leather belt, blue breeches tucked into long, soft leather boots a full "12" in size, and flat cap with leather peak. French soldiers in the now familiar blue-grey service uniforms or in khaki and a variety of headgear including picturesque black or blue tam o' shanter. Serbians in rough serge or the Indian khaki uniforms of British pattern, no belt, and black heavy boots like our fishing brogues with two straps to fasten them at the sides, and the blue, rough serge Serbian cap, elliptical in shape with a dent down the middle. French officers in the light blue service kit with their familiar red cap laced with gold and a band of varying colour round base, and long boots or gaiters. Or they wore the French tropical helmet of hideous conical shape with

flat sides—a most unsuitable headgear to fire in, one would think ; one often wondered how the soldiers lying on the ground managed to shoot at all till they had taken it off. Some had enamelled theirs blue, which did not add to the beauty of the headgear. Some French officers wore the British khaki service kit, Sam Browne belt and all. The French either wore medal ribbons or medals—there appeared to be no rule—whereas Russians invariably wore their medals, whilst the Italians wore ribbons. The Serbian officers were very spruce and neat, rather after the Austrian or German pattern where most had been trained, in blue, khaki or a thick grey Melton material, tunics with stiff collars of varying colour and flat, stiff broad shoulder straps of silver or gold with rank badges in silver or gold. The cap is the same shape as the privates', but stiff throughout with flat top and the white and red enamelled elliptical officers' badge worn in front. Beautiful top-boots, often patent leather, or gaiters and boots of dandified English make were worn. The British are in khaki to a man—Tommy in helmet, shirt, shorts and putties. The officer ditto, but with shoulder straps on his shirt bearing his rank badges. About this time an order was issued, however, which entailed the officer wearing a jacket when in the town, the other and cooler kit being used for duty only.

And the medals and decorations. Their number was legion, many of them won in the present war from all appearances. A youngster—a Russian of no more I judged than 26–28 summers—sat next to me one morning. He wore four decorations and medals suspended by long ribbons to his tunic and two others pendant to button-holes. That he had seen service and hard service his

weatherbeaten, determined face well showed. But what a time it is for the youth of the fighting nations !

Under other and peace-time conditions Salonika would be an ordinary Mediterranean town, very interesting and picturesque with its long semicircle of white and gaudily painted houses stretching from the sea front up the hillside, crowned by the old fort, and backed by the towering mountains behind. The sea front is especially interesting with the vividly painted Greek boats moored stern on up against the sea-wall, either loading up or unloading, the crew typically Greek, handsome and picturesque. Or the chaffering in the market in the early morning when the household's representatives are to be seen returning with a couple of quacking ducks or vociferous fowls held by the legs in one hand whilst the other one clasps a variety of produce for the day's consumption. But now all these amusing peculiarities of a continental town which used to catch the eye and hold the imagination when roaming abroad in the days of peace scarce distract the attention. If one notes them at all they make no impression—no lasting impression—on the senses. They no longer arrest the eye. For the streets have lost their peace-time appearance. They are filled with a motley throng of fighting men, and these are either intent on the work of the moment or are busily enjoying themselves for a few brief hours off from the round of duty under a hot sun in the trenches or on the "road," or in office.

The armies, when not in their own messes—in other words whenever they could get the evening off or a night or two down from the front—dined in the various restaurants or restaurant-café's in the town, all making rapid fortunes. For officers the two chief were Roma's,

in rooms above the Flocca Café, and the Tour Blanche. At either of these a dinner—it can only be described as moderate—could be obtained. And after dinner, *i.e.* about 9 p.m., the Bloods adjourned to the *café chantant* at the Tour Blanche or the Bristol, the former being the most chic. Here the scene at Flocca's was repeated but with most of the audience spic and span in the smartest of the kit they had brought to the war.

The show on the stage was about the last word in shows of this kind for inanity. And yet the fighting man on active service is so little inclined to be critical that rapturous applause greeted the efforts of the elderly ladies of lean and skinny, almost forbidding, aspect who, clad in scanty draperies, appeared, smirked and shrieked, when their voices were sufficiently strong, impossible ditties and who ever gave an encore whether asked for or not. Humorously ludicrous were these turns. And yet one did not go to see the performers on the stage, but to watch the audience. All nationalities would be favoured by the performers in turn, now French, now Russian, now English or Italian, and whole-hearted applause followed the efforts as each nationality recognised its own, or endeavoured to recognise its Ally's stunt and applaud it heartily. But these audiences! The performers were of quite secondary importance to the audience. The café was in the open air, a stage fixed up at one end, a row of rough stalls, looking like horse-boxes, down either side and the great centre arena filled with little tables and chairs occupied by officers and men of all nationalities stiting cheek by jowl without distinction. Civilians were in a very small minority, and these chiefly Greeks. But the Army types! Of Russians alone, there were several easily recognised

racés—the pure Russian, Cossack and Mongolian. Serbians, Rumanians and even the Bulgar type from the Balkans. Three Chinamen, Annanese, in khaki and French grey-blue uniforms with the queer mushroom hat, and carrying small black *fans* (in uniform, mind you), strolled past us—nasty customers these to meet when roused. Greek officers in immaculate white uniform with red or blue collar facings and gold-hilted swords, looking very fierce and martial but so out of keeping amongst the fighting men, were present. They were shortly to be shipped off after the successful Salonika “Revolution,” which occurred a few days later. A table near us may be taken as a good example of a hundred others. Three young Russian officers sat at it drinking some fiery liquor, but what it was I could not determine. One in a snuff-coloured uniform of a cavalry regiment had beautifully made, flexible top-boots which I greatly envied. He wore the cross of St. George and another medal, and looked ready to go anywhere and do anything and had evidently distinguished himself already on one of the Russian fronts, although absurdly young. But he had the cold steady eyes of the fighter. Next to him sat a youngster in khaki uniform of the Russian infantry pattern and the usual flat cap. A distinctly Mongolian type, of unusual height and robust physique, with the broad hatchet-shaped face, high cheek bones and narrow eyes. A most festive youngster this and evidently out to enjoy himself. The third wore the graceful Cossack uniform—long coat reaching below the knees, ornamented with gold lace, with a broad sash at the waist bristling with handsome weapons. A strikingly good-looking youngster with a lithe figure which set off his kit to perfection. Another table of interest close by

exhibited a very different type. French and all N.C.O.'s, but drawn from very different branches of the service. One elderly man wore a blue-grey cap of French pattern with leather peak, velveteen tunic and khaki breeches. Next to him sat a man in Indian khaki, wearing a French tropical helmet painted with grey enamel. His companion, also in khaki, with a black moustache, might have been an Egyptian or anything. He wore a fez-shaped cap of unusual height, dented in at the top, of a thick rough red flannel with three black stripes near the base. The last was in French blue-grey kit, wearing a long row of medal ribbons and a yellow flat French-shaped cap with a black peak. They were drinking coffee and cognac and discussing previous engagements. Next to us was a table of Serbian officers in immaculate kit, three out of the four wearing the beautiful Serbian decoration of the White Eagle. British soldiers and sailors were plentiful, occupying the major portion of the boxes, and the newly arrived Italians were also *en evidence*. There were not half a score civilians in the place and certainly not more than three women off the stage.

CHAPTER IV

IN SALONIKA : G.H.Q. AND OTHERS

I GOT switched off from serious business in the last chapter because the first impressions of Salonika, as it appeared in August, 1916, were so amazing that they seemed to deserve precedence even over the graver problems which had to be immediately tackled and if possible tackled successfully. We will now get back to them.

After visits to various offices, at which I was invariably received with the utmost courtesy (any one out to make more work could not be expected to be greeted with enthusiasm), I discovered the position to be as follows :— We had arrived early on a Thursday morning. The ship was to go into the Greek quay at noon on the Saturday and at once commence unloading the lorries and Ford vans belonging to the British M.T. As soon as the *Fraulein* had discharged this part of her cargo she was to proceed out into the bay to wait further orders. No provision could be made for discharging the hospital equipment till the ship's return. My newly made French acquaintances were very sorry but, with a shrug, *que faire!* there was no available labour. All was wanted for the Italians. I began to loathe these latter just then.

Colonel Sondermeyer and Dr. Bennett returned late on the Friday night. I was early at the former's office the following morning with my plan ready, which I explained to his Staff. It was quite simple. If they would give me a platoon of Serbian soldiers we would unload our boxes and bales ourselves whilst the M.T. cars were being got out. An introduction to Colonel Sondermeyer followed, with whom and his Staff I ever afterwards maintained excellent relations; even if they were occasionally aghast at my somewhat hustling methods, as each fresh difficulty presented itself. After all, was it not the dictum of that clear-headed old man, Prince Bismarck, or his confederate von Moltke, that war is a matter of improvisation on the moment? And if that is true of the actual fighting, it is even more so of transport work—out in Macedonia at any rate. Colonel Sondermeyer did not altogether like my plan but eventually agreed to it, provided the French authorities did not object. I had reason for thinking that they would close the eye to our proceedings. He undertook to get me the men.

It may be asked—Why the hurry? Well firstly, we had an opportunity of getting up to the front. It was a chance in a million. Also there were ugly rumours going about of a sudden advance by the Bulgarians, and it was even said that Ostrovo might be captured. Anyway fighting was going on up in the mountains; there would be wounded, and the Serbians had no properly equipped hospital on that front. Our job was to get up there in as short a space of time as possible. If the equipment went out into the bay with the ship, it might be a month at the least before we could get a move on. And in war what cannot happen in a month?

I went on out to the camp to report to the C.M.O. This camp, which I had not yet visited as I was still living on the ship, was about two and a half miles beyond the tram terminus, the tram lines running along the sea front some two miles or more from the centre of the town. I had been told I would probably get a lift on from the terminus in one of the cars belonging to the other unit of the S.W.H. working under the French, which had been established in Salonika for eight months or more. It was between twelve and one when I got there, frightfully hot, and every one, save those on duty, was taking a siesta after the midday meal. I met here Dr. McIlroy, who has been in charge of this unit from the outset. She has been decorated by the French with the Croix de Guerre in reward for the fine service of the unit. All the cars were out, so I continued on up a blazing hot hill, inches deep in white dust (oh, that maddening white dust of Salonika—how every man jack of us got to loathe it!) to the office of a British unit and unearthed a soldier clerk. “I’m afraid we can’t do anything for you, Sir, but there are plenty of French aviation cars going out to Mikra. You’ll get a lift in one of them.” I was surprised at this simple way of doing things, but turned to the sentry and told him to stop the next car passing. One soon came up, driven by a young Frenchman who spoke perfect English, and he dropped me at my destination. I soon learnt that getting lifts was the normal procedure out here where there were no taxis to hail. Once you got to know the ropes you could get a lift all over Macedonia—up to the front and even up to the trenches if you cared to. It was a gorgeously free country for seeing operations in, and you could go anywhere and do almost anything, provided you could get

away, and the sun, malaria, and dysentery left you sufficient energy. I explained my projected plan of campaign to the C.M.O., who agreed that it appeared feasible and said we would go and see Colonel Sondermeyer again later on and make sure that the men would be on the quay at six o'clock next morning, which was my arrangement, and also that we had my minimum of fifty. Dr. Bennett also agreed to provide me with a party of ckeckers from the girl orderlies.

I may take this opportunity to briefly describe the unit. At the head was Dr. Bennett, the C.M.O., whom I had already met at the docks at home whilst engaged in loading up the equipment. In addition the unit consisted at that time of some sixty women and was a truly Imperial Unit in character. Members hailed not only from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, but from the Dominions and the Colonies as well. Three of the doctor's staff alone came from Australia and New Zealand, the C.M.O. and Drs. Cooper and Scott; Dr. Lewis from England and Dr. Muncaster from Scotland. The administrator of the unit, Miss Jack, and Miss Gordon, sanitary officer, from Scotland; Miss Bedford, in charge of the cars, from Australia. The Matron, Miss Tate, from England, and Miss Kerr, chief of the culinary department, from Scotland. This completed the officer staff of the unit. Several of the orderlies also hailed from the Antipodes and others from elsewhere in the Empire. One of the latter, Miss Blair Wilson, a friend from Edinburgh, I had been accustomed to meet in very different conditions. Out here she made a charming and hard-working Mess Orderlie! Some members of the staff had also already seen service

in Serbia, having either been taken prisoners during the Retreat, as was the case with Drs. Lewis and Scott, Miss Jack, Miss Gordon, and Miss Kerr; whilst Dr. Muncaster had led her unit through the Retreat, eventually arriving at Durazzo after experiences which sounded like a fairy tale.

The money which had enabled the unit to be raised and fitted out had been subscribed in America (the unit being therefore entitled the "American" unit for the Serbian army). The following tale will I trust prove that the money so generously subscribed by the Americans was not wasted. There were also private donations, such as Lady Cowdray's magnificent gift of the total equipment of bedsteads for the hospital.

When I found the Greek quay that evening I discovered the *Fraulein* alongside. She had only got in at 4 p.m. and the work of hoisting out the lorries was about to commence. The Chief promised to have No. 5 hatches off ready to start our work next day. He had no orders, he said, about the hospital, but that was my affair. The party of girls, three orderlies to check and three chauffeur girls to drive up the ambulance cars which we had on board, arrived punctually at six next morning, but the Serbians only turned up at seven. I subsequently discovered that they had marched about twenty miles through the night!

We now commenced a piece of work of which we all felt inordinately proud when it was done. How long it would take I had not a notion, but it soon became obvious that, owing to delays and congestion, we should not see the end before midnight. As a matter of fact, we did not finish till 11 a.m. next day, working all through the night. And we nearly had to stop soon after the

start. There was no question of getting one of the Custom sheds to put our stuff in. All were full. But a place was marked down which would do. Before we started, however, it was invaded by Italian infantrymen, a new lot just being landed. A Frenchman advised me to see the French debarkation people in charge of this quay. I found the office. Nothing could be done, with a shrug. "We have got to land the Italians and all their kit and stores on this quay. How can there be room for you?" "But, monsieur, I have got my labour." "You had better see Monsieur le Capitaine, then. He will be in shortly." On his arrival my request was explained to him by his subordinate. There was a heated harangue. "Mais ce n'est pas possible. Absolument non, pas possible." But in the end he invited me to go out with him and look round. I suggested a spot, but he waived it aside with an "Impossible, monsieur." I next pointed out a long wall of one of the sheds. He said nothing and my hopes fell to zero. It was evidently touch and go. Eventually we returned to my wall. Reluctantly he gave his assent with the proviso that if the area was wanted the equipment would have to be shifted. Thinking that it would take some shifting once there, I agreed with profuse thanks. And that corner turned meant a good deal more than I guessed. The work was now got into full swing, four Frenchmen running the winches for us, but the rest of the job being done by the Serbians and the girl checkers. Having finished with Brass Hats for the time being, I got into shorts, putties and shirt (one has to be so immaculate to visit these French H.Q. offices) and prepared for a long day of it.

The lorries and M.T. Ford vans were luckily in the

forward holds, whereas we were in No. 5 right aft. This was fortunate, as it kept us free of each other ; but in other ways our position was unfortunate as the ship was too long for the quay and we had to unload in the extreme corner. To add to our troubles the only drinking pipe with tap was in that corner and consequently our bales and boxes were lowered over the side almost on the heads of an ever-present crowd of thirsty Italian, French, English and Serbian soldiery, to which now and again were added horses and mules. The pandemonium reigning in that corner can be better imagined than described. We were unable to swing the bales to the left as they would have dropped into the harbour. We could never have continued to carry on had it not been for the fact that the Serbian is a particularly phlegmatic individual in matters of this kind and patient to a degree—always ready to appreciate a joke, and to hide away behind a break of bales and smoke a cigarette (but what soldier is not like this ?), and, more important, to laugh when found out. They are like overgrown children in many respects and really very lovable. The way those men worked through that twenty-eight hours—hot hours during the day and correspondingly cold ones at night—was wonderful and quickly secured one's liking and admiration. With supervision they make as fine workers as any I have met, and when it comes to really hard fighting they are difficult to beat, as I trust to be able to show. Of course we did not get through those long hours without checks and worries. The two mechanics, Scott and English, the one in the hold, the other on the quay, were invaluable, and though unloading a ship was not exactly our *métier* in life, we got along somehow. The middle watches of the night

gave the greatest trouble. We all got sleepy and the tent bales made such tempting couches for the poor tired Serbs. One felt a brute hunting them out in the semi-darkness and turning them to again. Scott during that night was wonderful. In the morning a keen wind got up and between that and more Italians being landed and the dust the last few hours were a struggle. During the night the subalterns in charge of the car-unloading business, those who had come out on the ship, and myself put our heads together and it looked perilously like as if they would finish ahead of me (for they had a relief party—I had none), in which case the ship would immediately leave the quay. There being no officials about to worry us, we were able to so arrange matters as to reduce this danger to a minimum, but even then it was plain enough that it was going to be a very near thing. With the dawn we worked feverishly, most of our men being three-parts asleep. Not till the last half-hour arrived was there any certainty that we should finish, and by then the whole of the ship's company were as keen on the struggle as we ourselves, also not a few of the Frenchmen on the quay who knew what was taking place. In the end it was done. The heavy lorries saved us. They took longer to get out than had been anticipated. As the last went over the side forward we slung out the last five slings of tent flooring aft and the job was done. Five hundred and more ship's tons we had shifted, a creditable bit of work I was told by the professionals who had watched the job from the start, for a scratch lot of performers. The Serbs coiled themselves up on our dump, the size of which surprised the Frenchmen as also ourselves, but there were some 1400 bales, etc., in it, and went sound to sleep as one man,

The ship had already begun to move slowly as I and my kit were hurried down the companion way.

And now I have left the most amazing part of this piece of work till the last, to wit, the performance of the S.W.H. orderlies, for it was magnificent.

I have said that a party of orderlies were turned for the nonce into equipment checkers. The whole of the hospital equipment, every box, bale and piece of tent flooring was checked by these girls as it came over the side of the ship on to the quay and rechecked by others as it was stacked up in the dump some fifty yards away. The first party worked from 7 a.m. till 3 p.m., when, protesting vigorously that they were not tired and wanted to see the whole thing out, they were relieved and returned to the camp. The second party, four in number, started at 3 p.m. and worked on till 11 a.m. next morning ; it is as difficult to express admiration at the efficiency of the work they did as at the grit they displayed, for they only had about three hours' sleep that night. I had arranged to have them relieved at 8 p.m. ; for before the first lot, extremely angry, returned to camp, I had realised that we had an all-night's job in front of us. When, however, the relief arrived, to the disgust of party No. 2. who also wished to finish the job, the risk of restarting with a new lot was too great. We were then working in semi-darkness. It was next to impossible in the absence of light to explain our procedure clearly, and the Serbians who had got into the ways of party No. 2 and were already becoming sleepy would inevitably get bewildered with a change of management. Party No. 3, although naturally disappointed at not having their finger in this pie of hard work, returned to camp. We did not starve the

working parties. The officers of the ship saw to that. It was their unbounded hospitality which made the business a possibility, although they strongly disapproved of the women working in this fashion, and did not forget to let me know it; the girls themselves, however, laughed at them for—well I think I heard one say “sentimental idiots.” I don’t know how many sat down to the three luncheon parties which took place one after the other in the little saloon, but the C.M.O. was in No. 1, I remember. But party No. 2 had tea, dinner and breakfast next morning on board. We turned out of our cabins so that they might have a few hours’ sleep; but they had to be driven into them.

The mere recital of the way they worked is sufficient in itself. It requires no varnishing. The names of the checking party are well worthy of record. They are Mrs. Ingles and Miss Stirling (Australia), Misses Reid, Adam and Fowler (Scotland), Misses Smith and Dick (England).

CHAPTER V

SALONIKA AND MIKRA BAY

VERY disturbing rumours were flying about next morning, and it was certain that something unexpected had happened up at the front on both the right (British) and left (French and Serbian) wings. Colonel Sondermeyer and his staff appeared very grave and disturbed when I accompanied the C.M.O. on a visit there. Of course it was impossible to make out the exact position, but matters were sufficiently serious for orders to have been issued that the unit was to stand fast in the camp at Mikra Bay.

Almost would it look as if the strenuous work of unloading the equipment was to go for nought. The disappointment at the new order was severe, and the unspoken thought, which was in most of our minds, that after all we might not get up to the front, was the more tormenting in that no one would give voice to it.

We were hung up for the time being but by no means idle. The temporary camp out at Mikra Bay on the edge of the blue Mediterranean, with the beautiful Mount Athos in the distance, was a small affair consisting of a fine large mess tent and a handful of small and old, often holey, bell tents floored with a fine sand which got into one's bed, clothes, socks and boots, in fact, into everything, as a fresh breeze blew every afternoon.

We had a thunderstorm or two with heavy rain during the fortnight or so the unit were there, and then the place turned into a stodgy bog and the girls went about in oilskins and gum boots, a not unbecoming kit. The hours were workmanlike: Reveille, 6 a.m., breakfast 6.30 a.m. (think of that, you 9-o'clockers), dinner 12, tea 3.30 p.m., supper 7 p.m., and lights out at 9 p.m. But many must have often looked back with a sigh perhaps to the days of ease and comparative luxury enjoyed at Mikra. I say comparative, for we sat on rough forms, ate off rough deal tables innocent of napery, from enamelled plates, one cup ditto apiece (with knife, fork and spoon when they went round); bathing in the warm sea when so inclined, tea parties at Flocca's, where they had wonderful cakes and *patisserie*, rides in morn and evening, and very little work. Beautiful horses some of the Serbian officers had, and they were always ready to lend them. But many soon tired of this existence and grumbled for work.

Nor were all idle. Dr. Bennett started a canteen at the Railway Station in Salonika, which proved invaluable as long as we could run it; lent some of the nurses to one of the R.A.M.C. hospitals whose nursing staff had not arrived; and as soon as they could be fitted the ambulances began to run out to the field hospitals, carrying wounded and sick. And the C.M.O. worked hard enough for three. Others of us will more readily associate the sojourn at Mikra with the heat and dust and glare of the Greek quay than with the pleasant camp by the Mediterranean. And the quay at that period was not one of the least interesting parts of the town. During the next ten days on and off we spent many hours working there, the checking staff and myself,

and we never struck a day but a troopship had just come in and was discharging her living freight and their impedimenta. I soon began to appreciate the argument of the French G.H.Q. that they had no time to devote to our equipment and its fortunes. We lived those days in a turmoil of men, equipment, horses, mules and guns, carts of all conditions and sizes, lorries large and small, and motor cars, staff and otherwise. I had a guard of Serbians on our dump, but in spite of it each morning we had to set about retrieving our tent flooring, which had been carried by the newly-arrived soldiery all over the place to serve as beds or as particularly convenient resting places on which to pile their packs and equipment, saddles, mule packs, rifles, etc.; or as tables off which to dine. They always returned them to the dump with a laugh when they discovered we were the owners, but why we never lost any of the 700 odd pieces passes my comprehension.

When you add a glaring hot sun and dense clouds of fine white dust often blown about by a strong breeze, you have a picture of the conditions under which the checker girls worked. They did not appear to consider they were doing anything out of the ordinary. But the French and Italians, officers and men alike, held a different opinion. For they watched them at first with surprise and incredulity which changed to admiration. "*Oh! ces Anglais, ils sont si pratique*" was the oft-repeated exclamation. Whether this allusion referred to the methodical manner in which the girls worked or to the fact that we brought our women into the show as well as our men, I never determined. And the soldiers, French, Italian, and of course our own Tommies, were ever ready to help; hot, dusty and tired though they were

themselves, newly arrived in a strange country and, for the majority, unaccustomed heat. I could add much to this brief picture, but it will suffice.

Rumours flew about during those days of anxious suspense. The C.M.O. lived in the various offices, and not a day passed but I went to one or the other endeavouring to obtain definite promises of railway waggons or other transport in which to get our material up country as soon as our orders were received. But things were far from well on our front. We learnt that Florina in the Monastir Plain had been captured by the Bulgarians, who were advancing east on Ostrovo. If the latter fell, Salonika or its environs was still likely to be our fate. The single line of railway up to our left wing was quite inadequate to cope with the demands being made upon it, for we knew that reinforcements were being sent up as rapidly as possible. So much I gleaned at the various offices, but as to how serious matters really were we remained in the dark. I made the acquaintance of the senior British *liaison* officer with the Serbians, Major Solomon, during this period. He and his junior, Captain Gooden, apparently spent week and week about at Salonika and Ostrovo, and both were to prove stout friends and pleasant companions later on.

The Revolution of Salonika came on to entertain the town. It was a poor affair, but it created quite a sensation. We went in that morning in one of the cars and noticed an unusual lot of troops, all armed, patrolling; whilst a French regiment was on duty on the parade ground in front of the Greek barracks. The trams were not running. I went down to the quay to inspect the Serbian guard on the dump, returning about eleven with the C.M.O. More patrols were on the streets



CAMP OSTROVO—THE TENTS OF THE HOSPITAL
PERSONNEL



THE SCOTTISH WOMEN GOING INTO FLOCCA'S FOR
AFTERNOON TEA BY—NOT EXACTLY A ROLLS-
ROYCE. MISS BLAIR WILSON IN FOREGROUND



THE BRIDGELESS *Via Enagtia* ON THE SALONICA
PLAIN. AN M.T. FORD VAN AND ITS DRIVER.
THE OTHER MEN BELONGED TO MY CONVOY

and in front of the parade ground, but on the pavement across the road a couple of armoured cars were in position, guns out, loaded, and trained on the barracks. Their orders were to fire on the barracks at noon unless the Greek regiments therein surrendered before that hour. This state of affairs came about as follows.

Revolutions were no new thing in Salonika. The year 1908, for instance, witnessed the formation of the Young Turkish Party. This latest attempt was, however, almost, though not quite, bloodless. The Macedonian Greeks rose against the Athens policy which had already given over Eastern Macedonia to the invading Bulgarians and would help them down to Salonika if the Allies were not careful. Although there was great excitement in the town, the revolution itself passed off quietly enough so far as the inhabitants were concerned.

The movement broke out in the morning of August 30, Colonel Zimbrakakis of the cavalry, with all the officers of the Auxiliary Corps being at the head of it. At noon the 2nd Cretan Company were invited by their Commander Lieut. Tzaconas to join the movement. The 300 officers and men enthusiastically agreed, and headed by their band visited the barracks of the Gendarmerie, where they were joined by all the men, some 1000 strong. They then marched to the Place du Gouvernement, the rendezvous. The following proclamation was posted up on walls throughout the town :—" Greeks ! Following the noble idea of liberating the regions occupied by the Bulgarians, we call on your patriotism and ask for your help in the struggle which you are about to undertake, feeling sure that you will participate in our national aspirations. We now range ourselves by the side of the Allied troops, in order, with their help, to sweep

the invader from Macedonian soil. We ask all those Greeks who are abroad to give us their help also in this struggle for liberation which we shall undertake with courage, feeling sure that we shall contribute to give back soon to our country the position of which it has been deprived by the ambitions and interest of foreigners."

A second proclamation addressed to the troops said :—"Soldiers ! It is impossible to obey those who have ordered us to hand over Macedonia without resistance. To do so would show our absolute want of patriotic sentiment, the Army belonging to the country and not only to a certain element of it. The Commission of National Defence, constituted of persons representing the whole of Macedonia, under the presidency of a superior officer of the Greek Army, invites soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers to fall into line for the accomplishment of our sublime mission."

Later in the afternoon several thousand troops paraded through the town amidst great enthusiasm and proceeded to the French G.H.Q., where Colonel Zimbrakakis formally announced to General Sarraill the formation of the Commission of National Defence. On the following day, the 31st, a proclamation was posted announcing a general mobilisation in Macedonia. This day saw the end of this most successful little revolution. But events had happened during the past night whilst the inhabitants slept. At the interview which had taken place between General Sarraill and Colonel Zimbrakakis the former had sanctioned the announcement that he would welcome with pleasure those Greek troops who wished to join themselves with the Allies in Macedonia. This decision was received with great

acclamation. The National Defence Party and their troops then marched through the town and took possession without incident of the building settled upon as their H.Q. But there was to be opposition. Some 1500 Greek Infantry belonging to the 3rd Army Corps and occupying large barracks in the town facing the Champ du Mars, the parade ground, had refused to join the movement. In order to avoid a conflict if possible, Colonel Zimbrakakis had the barracks surrounded, cutting off the water supply and electric light (which resulted in stopping the trams). The barracks were unprovisioned. Between three and four a.m. about 200 of the infantry thus rounded up made a sortie. They were warned that they would be fired upon, but persisted, were fired upon and lost three killed, and seven wounded. Shortly before dawn a second small engagement took place, both sides firing. This soon died away and no more casualties were reported. Neither side had been too keen on exposing themselves after the first blood had been drawn. During the morning of the 31st the barracks had remained in a state of siege, and it was this spectacle which we witnessed when passing the parade ground into and back from Salonika. The infantry were given till noon to surrender, after which hour they would be attacked. They made the best of an impossible position and Colonel Tricoupis, their Commander, a brave man and loyal to his salt and King, however misguided we may think him, surrendered to the French. The infantry with some forty officers were marched out without arms escorted by the French, the Committee of National Defence taking possession of the barracks. The revolution was over and the shops hastened to exhibit portraits, hideous

monstrosities most of them, of Venizelos the Patriot! In the weeks to come, as a result of the mobilisation, crowds of Macedonian civilians were to be seen marching along the roads leading to Salonika, hordes of men giving but little promise of turning out efficient fighting men. But the same spectacle was to be seen on all sides in England in the early days following Kitchener's call. And we all know, and so does Germany, the result of *that* call.

During their few Sundays in Salonika the unit was "at home" in the afternoons. Many had friends or relatives in the place or these had come down from the front on a few days' leave for the purpose, whilst it gave a chance of showing hospitality to the French, Serbian and British officers who were either responsible for our movements or were giving us disinterested advice and help. The camp was a brilliant sight on these few occasions, the uniforms of French and Serbians with the British and French Naval blue lighting up the British officer's sober khaki. Colonel Sondermeyer and one or more members of his staff were invariably present, coming up from the office and returning there afterwards.

Several extraordinary reunions took place. One of the chauffeur girls met a brother whom she had not seen for seven years. He was in one of the Australian Regiments, had been wounded and only just arrived here from Malta. They must have been children, or the girl at least, when they last met. What a place and time to meet again! Our sea friends came to visit the camp, of course; in fact the whole harbour, so far as one could make out, made a point of visiting the various hospital units in Salonika, in all of which Sunday

afternoon was the "at home" day, to see their lady friends. This was a wise innovation whoever inaugurated it, as it helped to lighten for a few hours the constant strain to which the women were subjected through the week. The gaiety was light-hearted enough, and chiefly consisted in swapping local gup, retailing the last impossible rumour from the front or home, or yarning, especially from the sailors.

One story I must tell. It may be a chestnut—possibly is—but anyway it'll be my last sea yarn, and it is appropriate for a Sunday.

A warrant officer, a rough old sea bird of long service on board a man-of-war in port, was ordered to line the men up for service one Sunday morning according to their different denominations. Having his men lined up on the deck, the surly old salt, who was ill-acquainted with religious sects; barked out the following orders :—

" Church of Hengland—Stand fast.

" R.C.'s—One pace step forward. March.

" Fancy Religioins—One pace step back. March."

CHAPTER VI

SOME DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY IN WHICH THE WESTERN ARMIES WERE TO OPERATE

It will be necessary, before proceeding further, to give as briefly as possible some idea of the fascinating, picturesque, but exceedingly difficult country, from the Transport Officer's point of view, in which the Allies were about to commence an advance. I mention the Transport Officer, for his was undeniably a Herculean task, but the armies operating in the mountainous regions, and the greater part were, had an exceedingly difficult and perilous job in front of them.

The plain of Salonika is some fifty miles broad, surrounded by high mountains spread out in a fan-shaped manner with the town at the centre. The River Vardar, piercing the Northern Mountains, flows across the plain as a turgid stream, entering the bay of Salonika a few miles to the west of the town. To the west of the Vardar (Axios) another giant cleft in the mountains enables the Moglenitza river to reach the plain ; further to the west is the Voda river, and right in the south the Vistritza (Haliakmon). The basin of the Moglenitza is some 20 miles long and 4 to 8 broad. It is bounded by steep, bare mountains from 4200 feet to 8284 feet in height, and consequently the river is subject to rapid flooding after rain, which results

in sudden inundations occurring in the plain to the south. The portion of the plain within the area of this river produces fine crops of millet, maize and cotton, two to three crops a year being obtained. The newly reformed Serbian Army was encamped here after reaching Macedonia, but was not left in these pleasant quarters for long, being sent up into the Moglena Mountains to take up positions facing the Bulgars, who occupied the highest crests, of which Kajmaktealan, 8284 feet, formed one of the highest and strongest. There were no roads in these mountains, but a few tortuous, steeply graded mountain tracks give access to the Cherna Valley.

To the south-west of the Moglena Range the mountains are cleft by another valley, that of the Voda. This practically forms the sole route into the Monastir Plain, both the railway—a single line from Salonika to Monastir—and the Monastir road proceeding up this cleft. The road—the *Via Egnatia*—is the old Roman road from the Ægean to the Adriatic which continued across Albania to Durazzo (Dyrrachium). The railway and road run together from Salonika to the curious old-world village of Jenidze-Vardar or Yanitsa. From here the railway runs south to Verri and then turns north to Vertekop, where it rejoins the road which keeps due west to the latter after leaving Jenidze-Vardar. From Vertekop, situated at the western extremity of the Salonika plain, you perceive the valley or cleft in the mountains to the west, up which both railway and road pass on their way to Ostrovo *en route* to the Monastir Plain. Orchards, vineyards and mulberry copses clothe the outer face of the lower hills here as you commence the climb to Vodena (Aigai), one of the most quaint and picturesque of ancient towns, once the old capital, perched upon the top of

more or less precipitous rock from which cascades and shining waterfalls gush down through the green mulberry clumps. The view of Vodena with its white minarets and poplar trees is a most picturesque one from the plain, as picturesque in its way as is the town itself. Beyond Vodena the valley becomes an upland plateau never very wide; in volcanic depressions in which, in addition to smaller ones, are situated the great lakes of Ostrovo and Petersko, the former many shades of blue, the latter of emerald green. On leaving Ostrovo the road and railway run along the north and north-western side of Lake Ostrovo, subsequently reaching Sorovitch and Ekshisu. On leaving the latter the railway turns north to Banitsa and then north-west to Florina and Monastir. A second road or mountain track runs from Ostrovo to Banitsa over the mountains, and this formed one of the two lines of communication of the first and third Serbian Armies operating in these hills during these fateful months. I shall have more to say about these roads later.

From this brief description it will be understood that the line of communications was extremely inadequate and hampered the movements of the armies to a very considerable extent. The single line of railway, after leaving the plain at Vertekop, ascends the mountains to Ostrovo in a tortuous manner, up extraordinary steep gradients and over many viaducts. On some of them it always appeared a toss-up whether the train would not run backward, and it had to take frequent rests even with two engines on, to allow the latter to get up a fresh head of steam. Eight trains in the twenty-four hours was all that could usually be run and the requirements needed about 80. The train took anything from 18 to



BANITSA IN THE MACEDONIAN MOUNTAINS

24 hours to do the 90 miles between Salonika and Ostrovo. After leaving Ostrovo the levels were easier, and up to August trains could run to Florina. Subsequently the Bulgars blew up the big Ekshisu viaduct and the railway could only serve the French up to the latter place.

As regards the road, it is, as has been said, an old Roman road. In the plains from Salonika to Vertekop, it consisted of old *pavé* in an appalling state of disrepair, most of the bridges being wanting. When it entered the hills it became a mountain track or bridle path, consisting of varying stretches of deep sand, hiding large boulders or rocky masses, varied by lengths of naked projecting rock masses of all sizes and sharpnesses. There were miles of this kind of thing, and in the towns cross channels of varying depth and width and in great numbers made progression in motor cars a thing of torture. Needless to say no car had ever been seen on the road before the war, and until early in last year no inhabitant of Vodena who had not "travelled" had ever seen a car.

When you reach Banitsa by either of the two roads I have described, you have reached the south end of the Monastir Plain. The lake road was the line of advance of the French and Russians. The scenery after leaving Vertekop is varying—at times wild, gloomy, almost menacing, as the great barren rocky mountains close in on the road; at others smiling, "riante," as the French would express it, with small cultivated oases and orchards and in places small vineyards.

I have mentioned the river Vistritza. This river is situated in the south of the area here considered, and runs north-east through the mountains to Verria (the old Berea of the "Acts of the Apostles") and the

Bay of Salonika. A road runs from Verria along this valley and reaches Kozani, then turns north to Florina and Monastir. The importance of Kozani lies in the fact that it is the centre of lines of communication linking up Thessaly and Macedonia and therefore Greece and Germany *viâ* Monastir.

If I have made myself intelligible it will thus be seen that the French had a single line of railway to Ekshisu, a road running alongside the railway, and a second longer route from Verria *viâ* Kozani. Then both these roads with one or two branch ones connecting them continued due north over the plain to Monastir. The Serbian front had the road as far as Ostrovo. In the Moglena Mountains roads were non-existent. The Serbian armies were served from this Salonika-Ostrovo road by mountain tracks leading north from the road at Vertekop or Vodena and Ostrovo, and these tracks were of the most appalling nature. We all know that Napoleon crossed the Alps in the face of stupendous topographical difficulties. The Serbs had to face very similar conditions in the Moglena Mountains, the difference being that Napoleon was able to take his enemies by surprise, whereas the Serbs had to face a watchful enemy already occupying all the crests which they had fortified. All the more honour to the brave Serbs who, undismayed, turned the Bulgars out of their prepared strongholds, after sanguinary fighting under probably some of the most difficult conditions which have ever faced an army.

To complete this brief survey a few words may be said about the eastern wing. Between the Vardar and the Struma, our eastern limit of operations, the armies are engaged in trench warfare similar to that on the western front in France. The British, some French and

Italians were here. The reason for this difference in the methods in east and west (for there was but little trench warfare save in one instance on the west) is that both on the east and west of Lake Doiran an advance would take the Allies into the Strumnitza valley, which would open the way to Sofia. The Bulgars have therefore fortified this part of the line very strongly. This front is served by the railway running due north from Salonika to Doiran, then east to Demirhissar, and thence through Seres and Drama, eventually reaching Constantinople. The mountains east of Doiran, almost impassable country, were held by the Italians, and beyond, the narrow Struma gap which offers an entrance into Bulgaria, is protected by the Rupel Fort made over by the Greeks to the Bulgarians. The eastern wing thus practically serves as a pivot for the west wing to turn on and also proves the possibilities (or did so last year) of the advance to the north of Monastir.

Space will not permit me to devote time to a description of the extraordinary collection of types met in the towns in this tract of country. Greeks, Turks, Albanians, Jews, Serbs, the Bulgar type, Roumanians—all are seen in the streets of Jenidze-Vardar or Vodena. The houses with their overhanging stories, carved wood-work and projecting roofs almost meeting overhead, are reminiscent of mediæval Europe, whilst the little open-faced shops below with the men squatting down inside resemble an Indian or Cairo bazaar. And the clothing worn is as varied in type as are the people themselves, an extraordinary mixture of East and West.

The agriculturists of the countryside are chiefly Greeks, with some Rumanian and Turkish villages. The

animals used in ploughing are the ox and sometimes the buffalo. Both are used as draught animals. But the commonest beast of burden is the donkey. He is indispensable—carries the produce to market, the ploughs to the field and back again, fodder for the cattle, a common sight, and in addition to any burden he may be loaded with, he has to carry his owner. They are very small these donkeys, and it was a ludicrous sight to see some long-legged Greek astride one of these diminutive animals, his legs touching the ground on either side; and still funnier to meet a fat Turk astride or a veiled woman in gala dress going into market.



THE MACEDONIAN DONKEY, ITS LOAD AND OWNER



TYPES OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE MACEDONIAN VILLAGES.
NOTE THE VILLAGE PRIEST ON THE EXTREME RIGHT. ONE OF OUR WORKING GANGS
WITH THE PRIEST AS OVERSEER

CHAPTER VII

TO OSTROVO IN CHARGE OF AN ADVANCE PARTY

THE scene changed suddenly—the Bulgarians were thrown back slightly—the camp buzzed with the news. Colonel Sondermeyer appeared in the camp one afternoon—Friday, September 1st—and asked whether we could send up a detachment with sufficient tents for the whole personnel at once. A short conference ensued and it was arranged that tents and material sufficient for a few nights should be dispatched with an advance party on the following Sunday, using our own transport, the rest of the personnel following on the Tuesday and the balance of the equipment later. It was not an ideal arrangement, but there were reasons for it which I need not go into here. Suffice to say that a big push was impending—that there was no properly equipped hospital up at that front, that the Serbians were desirous of getting one there in time, and ours was the one to have the chance. Risks we had to take, as you will see when I describe the journey of the advance party. Ostrovo was eighty-five miles away by road, and after leaving the plains the road became a mountain track of sand or rock. There was a terrific hill to negotiate and some broken bridges—bad enough this for light cars, but we were to take up two loaded lorries. It was hoped that we might get through in the day—Colonel Sondermeyer

is of a sanguine temperament and moreover he had never taken a convoy of lorries up. Also Mrs. Harley's unit had had some curious experiences on the road earlier in the week and they only tried to take up two light ambulances. The day following the conference was a pretty strenuous one. Dawn found us tackling the dump on the quay. An Italian transport had just come in, a British with heavy lorries shortly followed; and a strong breeze was blowing. We had to look for some sixty tent bales and boxes out of the dump of some 1400 odd. We got through by midday, and our two heavily overloaded lorries were dispatched to camp. We heard on the quay that the *Fraulein* had only just come alongside again, and we congratulated ourselves on having been able to unload our material when she was first in, nearly two weeks before. Whether we should have got up to the front at this period had we not been ready to start is open to doubt, as will be shown. The afternoon was spent in getting the two lorries and three ambulances which were to form the convoy of the advance party ready. We started at dawn next day—one of the cars getting a puncture when scarce two miles from camp costing us an hour. The party consisted of thirteen Scottish women, including Dr. Muncaster, who had been through the Serbian retreat, with Miss Gordon (sanitary engineer), Miss Kerr (chief of the cooking department), one of the sisters, and orderlies, amongst whom were several of the checking party, and three chauffeur girls (Misses Green, James, and Baker), myself, two Serbian chauffeurs and two other Serbs. There is no doubt that the unit looked upon the business as a picnic party. I know that tears were shed in some quarters when the list of names of the party was read

out and keen members found they were not included. My own private opinion as to the "picnic" idea I kept to myself. But you'll admit it was a novel and piquant experience to set off to the Front with a party of women, a heavily loaded convoy, and in front of one eighty-five miles of unknown road, half of which was a mountain track, whilst the gradients and bridges on the whole length were of an extremely doubtful character.

Our pace was to be regulated by that of the lorries, since it was essential that the convoy should keep together. Of the three girl chauffeurs with us two were driving the lorries and as we carried on down the Monastir road through Salonika that early Sunday morning, we made a party which arrested the attention of all and sundry. The S.W.H. were well known in Salonika, but they had never before turned out quite such a convoy as we presented nor had they ever had the luck to send one up to the Front before. The big lorries run by the girls were the chief centre of interest. I must pass over the fifty miles or so of road in the plains. At that time it was still appallingly stony or rocky or sandy, but we ran through picturesque Yanitsa (Philip of Macedon's capital, known as Pella) and subsequently passed the two big British hospitals at Vertekop, placed some eight miles or so from the foot of the mountains, without any incident of importance, halting half an hour for lunch. Soon after restarting we came to a bridge where we expected trouble. A French N.C.O. stopped us and said the lorries would have to be unloaded, as the bridge could not carry them, and the new bridge was not ready. A very brief inspection showed this to be the case. A party of Serbian soldiers arrived to assist, and it was a case of coats off and one and a half

hours of hard work. Sleepers were laid end on across the rickety bridge to take the wheels of the cars. There was no trouble with the ambulances but considerable difficulty with the lorries. One, the smaller, was taken over by one of our girl chauffeurs (Miss Baker). I was on the lorry, and was very glad when she got to the other side. It was a plucky feat. The heavy one was got across, after several close shaves of going into the chasm below, by an M.T. staff-sergeant who opportunely appeared on the scene and proved a veritable godsend during the next thirty hours. Loading up we restarted, and a few miles further on brought us to the foot of the big climb up to the town of Vodena. With some difficulty we got both lorries about a fourth of the way up the hill, and their condition being by then alarming we left them to cool whilst we had tea in a little mulberry plantation. That meal may be said to have ended the "picnic" part of this journey. We then tackled the lorries again. We unloaded a part of the smaller one and Miss James with some difficulty got it about three-fourths up the hill to an awkward bend and announced that that was her limit and probably that of the lorry. The big one refused to budge save backwards and appeared to be suffering from a sprained axle and other disabilities too complicated to diagnose. After this inspection and leaving it safely propped up, we confined ourselves to the smaller one. Again the staff-sergeant and his three men, who had gone on up the road on some duty or other, appeared and the former volunteered to drive the lorry up. It would take too long to detail the shifts we were put to, but in the end the brilliant idea of backing her up was mooted and she got to the top in that fashion with the help of some short

lengths of sleepers we had brought from England with us. These we plugged under the wheels every ten yards or so, and at the end of the job our own mothers and wives would not have recognised us. The lorry was taken to the entrance to the town of Vodena—a most picturesque place, but with an unsavoury reputation of which I had been warned—and there halted. This was a mischance. Those of us who had been grubbing about on the road were breathless by the time we got to the top of the hill, and the sergeant ran on with the lorry before I could pull him up. Here we should have to camp for the night, and a dirtier or more unpromising spot it would have been hard to find. Serbian soldiers were camped in fields to the right. To left the area was used as a dumping ground and playing ground for the urchins of the town—Greek, Albanian, Turk, etc., of whom a horde had already gathered to look at us, and loot if possible. Though one lorry was up we were in no enviable position. The sun was dropping behind the crest of a great mountain in the west. I had one lorry at the top of the hill, another stranded three-quarters way down, and strung out between the two, over a mile and a half of road, the party of thirteen women, three ambulances and a number of bales flung out on to the road at intervals to lighten the small lorry. I lost no time in setting off to retrieve these various articles. I was soon relieved on the subject of the girls. They were strolling up the hill in parties of two or three apparently picking flowers, and evidently not at all disturbed by our position and the certainty of a night out. But they had as an example Dr. Muncaster, who preserved an unruffled demeanour on all occasions, even, I believe, during the Serbian retreat of the previous year. Others of the party were engaged

in retrieving the bales and bringing them up in the ambulances. I returned in the first to the lorry, had a fire started and saw water put on to boil to make some coffee, the only hot thing we could hope to have, and went down below to set a guard over the stranded lorry and pick up the rest of the party. Down below I met a powerfully-engined French Aviation lorry on its way up to Ostrovo, and the young Frenchman offered to take on some of the bales for us, an offer I jumped at. The freemasonry of the road out yonder is a wonderful thing to experience. I returned up above with him. The encampment was a funny sight. The cars were drawn up at the side of the road. The question of sleeping accommodation was being discussed over the supper. It was solved as follows—six were to sleep on the stretchers in the ambulances, three others elected to sleep on top of the bales on the lorry, and for the remainder we prepared a large bed on the road-side, consisting of tent bales covered with a tarpaulin. I had been strongly advised to get a guard for the camp, as Vodená was not the safest place to spend a night near. This I now set out to do. The Serbs encamped below the road were unable to give me one, but I heard from a Frenchman that I might get one from a French cavalry regiment bivouacking in the town. With the head light of one of the cars, and accompanied by a Serb who professed to know the whereabouts of the regiment, I set off on my quest, asking some of the camp to keep awake till I returned. Vodená is a quaint town, the streets very narrow, with a vile *pavé* full of holes, and over-hanging eaves to the houses. At night it is dark as pitch. Our headlight gave out more smoke than light, progress being extremely irksome. At length we reached



THE QUANT, MEDIEVAL TOWN OF VODENA. THE WOMEN ARE WASHING CLOTHES



MARKET DAY IN VODENA. VODENA WAS THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF MACEDON,
KNOWN AS AIGAI

a parting of the ways—an open space of some kind and ran into a party of French soldiers, very hilarious, having just been turned out of a café at closing time. I explained my predicament. “Guard! What does Monsieur want a guard for? Some ladies with him. *Bien*, we will guard the ladies. Are we not quartered in the last house in the town close to Monsieur’s cars? The café is shut, and we are now returning there.” They were very amusing on the way back and turned into their quarters with renewed protestations of guarding the ladies. In a way they did. They made noise enough, for they snored in concert and loudly all night!

As it was impossible to leave the cars unprotected on the road at night, if only from the point of view that transport might be expected up and down it (though as a matter of fact only a few soldiers passed), I saw that the head and tail lights were burning, and did sentry-go myself. It was a curious experience and not without interest. I spent most of the night tramping up and down the road, revolver in one hand and pipe in the other. The chief troubles were cold (it was bitter), dust blown up into one’s nostrils whenever one sat down for a rest, and dogs. These latter barked and yapped all night and cruised round as near the camp as they dared. To some extent they helped to keep me warm, as I must have ckucked a cartload or two of stones at them during that long night. The unit slept—in fact, between ourselves, some of them snored. Somewhere about midnight I met a wraith on the road, a shivering wraith. It was one of the chauffeur girls. I asked her where her companion was. She did not know. But we unearthed her in the driving seat of the lorry, the aprons fixed up all round and warm as

a toast ! I introduced the other into this roost amidst the indignant remonstrances of the occupier. That conversation lasted some time.

With the dawn next morn, the grey dawn, the party woke, vowed they were frozen stiff, had never slept a wink all the night, etc. But I knew better. We collected some sticks, lit a fire and made some tea. It was suggested that the Scottish women should go off into the town and search for a hotel we had been told existed there and get a wash and if possible breakfast. They left me provided with tea, bully beef and biscuits, and set off at 6.30 presenting a remarkable sight as they trooped up the street. Having got rid of them I climbed into the driving seat of the lorry, shaved there comfortably, and then set off up the street to a fountain said to exist, where I washed before an interested audience of men, women, and children, attired in costumes which would have been the delight and despair of an artist. I breakfasted leisurely—there was nothing to be done as I was awaiting an answer to an urgent message sent off by the staff-sergeant the night before to his C.O. for certain assistance. The party returned having had such wash and breakfast as the hotel afforded. Then we had a stroke of luck. A big French lorry passed up empty on its way to bring down a smashed aeroplane. Would he empty our stranded lorry for us and bring the bales and tent poles up to our present position ? He would and did, and earned our great gratitude. The stranded lorry was left to its fate with a Serbian soldier on guard and he remained there several days. We were packed so far as possible and ready for the road when about 9 a.m. a small convoy of Ford cars in charge of two M.T. officers turned up to assist us. Our friend the staff-



OSTROVO, WITH THE GREAT KAJMAKALAN MOUNTAIN AT THE BACK.
CLOUDS AND THE SMOKE FROM SERBIAN BATTERIES IN ACTION ARE
SEEN ON THE FACE OF THE MOUNTAIN



THE ENTRANCE TO VODENA—WHERE I SPENT THE NIGHT ON SENTRY-GO

sergeant was told off to take the lorry on to Ostrovo if the feat was possible. The dump from the stranded lorry was to be left with a guard and our three ambulances were to go ahead, the rest of the party being brought along in the M.T. cars. We had varied experiences in the deep sand or rocky bridle paths which formed the "road" and, halting only when the cars boiled over or got choked with oil, the first two ambulances reached Ostrovo about 4 p.m., having run into our first sound of the booming guns about an hour before. We reported in Ostrovo to Colonel Milosavlovitch, head of the medical staff here, and were directed to the camp site about three miles away near the upper end of the lake. On arrival here we found a Serb infantry regiment encamped on the spot, but were told that they were to leave for the firing line at dawn next day. Our tent-pitching party of Serb soldiers sent on ahead were not present and were subsequently discovered in a camp three miles away, and we saw nothing of them that night. Our chief preoccupation was to get a tent up, and the lorry actually arrived, about half full only, before dark, driven by that magnificent man the staff-sergeant, who, somewhat ruffled in temper, said he was not taking on another job of that description, no, not for no Scottish women nor any other women. I could well believe it—it was a fine feat. We got up one tent, shared our meal with the M.T. people who had helped us, and turned in, with the sound of the guns thundering on the surrounding crests, My quarters were an ambulance filled with a miscellaneous kit of various members of the party plus all our commissariat. I have already elsewhere briefly described the "road" between Vodena and Ostrovo as it was at that time. Long tracts of deep sand alternated with

rocky strata, projecting from the ground surface at all angles and of all sizes, over which we bumped agonizingly, were varied by deep cross-water channels into which we crashed and often stuck with a wearying monotony. I don't suppose there were fifteen yards of consecutive flat surface in the whole distance. Maddening as it was to be bumped over obstacles one could see coming, it was far worse to be shot out of one's seat going over them hidden in the deep sand. No road can ever present any terrors for those who have seen, and felt, the roads of Macedonia in their pristine glory.

Ostrovo village, situated in the north-east corner of the lake, is a poor, rather squalid scattered village lying on the hillside with the railway station in the sandy waste at the foot on the shore of the lake, the single track of the railway line running down the east shore across the northern edge and then, as described already, up the western edge; where the track has been blasted out of the steep rocky mountain sides. The houses in Ostrovo are mostly built of rubble stone, with tiled roofs, its redeeming features being the graceful white minaret and its fine setting amongst the mountains, for as you approach it from the south the village is framed by the great mass of the Kajmakcalan.

The site allotted to us for our camp was some three miles to the south of Ostrovo, 200 to 300 yards from the southern end of the lake in the angle made by the railway approaching from the east, where it turns sharply north to run up the lake edge. The hills around the site were for the most part devoid of trees—barren, rocky, rugged masses. The actual site was in a small fold in a swelling in the cleft of the Voda valley, where it reaches the lake. The fold, running north and south, was bounded on

the south by the railway and road, to the north it ended in a small rocky eminence which I shall have occasion to allude to later. In the fold were some clumps of fine old elm trees arranged more less in double lines. They were the only trees of this kind and the only clumps within several miles. The site as a camp site was as fine a one as I had ever seen in a mountainous country. It had been used, as a matter of fact, by troops for some time past, both artillery and cavalry having been camped here for some months. It was well known to both Bulgar and German aeroplanes. And this was the only drawback to it for a hospital, as it intensified the risk of being bombed. However, there was nowhere else in the neighbourhood offering a tithe of its advantages, and it was selected accordingly.

The orders were that the camp should be pitched under the trees so as to hide the tents from aeroplanes. A very short inspection of the area disclosed the fact that it would be next to impossible to carry out the order. It was easy enough for the Serbians to hide their tents beneath the trees, as they are of the tiniest—the men's only two feet six inches to three feet in height. The whole can be rolled up and carried on the back. Ours was a different problem. We had over a score of thirty feet by sixteen feet tents for the wards alone. You cannot hide tents of this size beneath trees, placed in double or single rows as these mostly were, and more especially when those trees are elms.

There was a great difference in temperature up here, compared with Salonika. Although the sun was very hot during the day when we first arrived, necessitating wearing a helmet, the nights were quite cold and were destined to become still colder.

We were up at dawn, and after a bully beef breakfast started to work, having only five Serbians to assist—the rest of that party being down with malaria. We had wired to stop the personnel from starting before Thursday, as it was obvious that the camp could not be got ready sooner. We had our first excitement up here this morning in an aerial combat overhead between a French and Bosche plane. The latter was making for Kajmaktalan. We suddenly heard firing overhead, and glancing up saw two planes circling in the deep blue vault, the sun glistening on their wings as they caught its rays in their evolutions. Tiny puffs of smoke came from each for a time, and then one of them broke away and made off due west. As soon as it became evident that he was bolting, the Archibalds opened out on him, and tiny round white balls of smoke suddenly made their appearance in his neighbourhood. The balls appeared sometimes behind, at others in front and under him, but never above, as he was climbing fast, and he eventually disappeared in the blue ether unharmed.

By about 4.30 we had got up four tents, all hands helping in the work, few of whom had ever tried that kind of thing before. We were finishing off No. 4 when a car appeared on the track below us, and from it, to our consternation, alighted Dr. Bennett.

Our wire had not arrived in time, and all the unit was on the road and was expected to arrive that night! They were coming up in a convoy of Ford vans. The five tents we had up, with the ambulances, would nearly take them all at a pinch, and mercifully the camp cots had been retrieved from the dump at Vodena, through some skilful diplomacy on the part of the chauffeur girls dispatched for that purpose earlier in the day.



CAMP OF THE ADVANCE PARTY AFTER ARRIVAL AT OSTROVO ON THE
SERBIAN FRONT



THE UNIT PICNICKED FOR SOME DAYS AFTER ARRIVAL AT CAMP OSTROVO,
AS NO TIME COULD BE GIVEN TO PITCHING THE MESS TENT

But food was the serious question, the only article we knew there was plenty of was bully beef. The Commissariat at this end had not yet been put in trim, potatoes, bread, etc., being absent. The personnel commenced to arrive about seven and continued to do so till 11 p.m., the remainder getting in next day. This latter lot spent the night on the roadside, shaking down in the Ford vans. The convoy got off with one accident only. One of the cars went over the side, being pulled up from a drop of several hundred feet by a small tree. There was only one orderly in the car, and she was badly bruised and suffered from shock. The Tommy driver got off scathless. The car had the worst of it. The supper started about 6.30 that night and went on till near midnight as fresh people dribbled in. My recollections are of putting together untold numbers of camp cots, carrying them about the ground, shoving them into tents, whose occupants said they were already full up and did not want them, and of arguing with members who said they proposed to sleep outside. We knew how cold it was up here and they did not. As we had only one or two lanterns, most of the business was done in darkness. Eventually, when the camp had got to bed after a fashion, I picked up a camp cot and by accident ran into the lorry in the dark. I remembered the lorry was empty, so hauling the cot into it I rolled up in my blankets and slept sound.

At dawn next morn the scene that met my gaze, as I cautiously raised my head over the edge of the lorry, baffles description. A couple of girls were standing alongside an ambulance drawn up next to the lorry, out of which they had apparently just crawled, having slept all standing, as all had I suppose. Camp cots with

recumbent forms or sitting up ones were scattered about the area, whilst over last night's camp fire three people were bending. I hadn't much to do except shave, which I did seated on the floor of the lorry, and then went to the spring to wash. Several of the Tommies who had driven up the convoy were engaged in their ablutions; others were shaving close by, their mirrors propped up on the splashboards of the cars. A handful of Serbs stood watching the Tommies. About twenty yards away a knot of women, sitting upon some small rocks, a kerosene tin or two of water amongst them, were engaged in washing or in combing their hair. They were members of the unit! It really was the funniest and most extraordinary sight I've ever looked upon—that camp of the Scottish women at Ostrovo on the first morning after their arrival.

Washing over, we proceeded to breakfast—bully beef and sweet biscuits, taken standing under the trees. Breakfast over, tent-pitching began again in earnest, and all not wanted for other duties—doctors, nurses, etc., were pressed into the working parties in order to have more accommodation before nightfall. I had received orders to return to Salonika with the empty convoy to bring up the equipment, but a tent or two was put up before we left at 12.30, a small jar of bully beef for my dinner being packed in with me in case I didn't get in!

CHAPTER VIII

TRANSPORT WORK IN MACEDONIA

I LEFT the camp in its initial stages of erection with extreme reluctance to return to Salonika to tackle the job of getting up the bulk of the equipment. It is extraordinary what a power the sound of guns fired in anger has over us, producing a thrill one would not be without. Of course that experience, like anything else, soon loses its novelty, but whilst the novelty is there one is loath to quit it. Consequently it was with a feeling of depression that I climbed into the first of the Ford vans and set out with the convoy on our 85-mile run over that vile road to Salonika. The orders were that the cars, some twenty in number, were to keep together (so far as possible).

I started with a youngster who hailed from the "Elephant and Castle," in the Old Kent Road, close to which he had been born and reared. (How far it seemed away to us both, and with what affection in his voice he spoke of that salubrious locality!) An only son, he longed as earnestly to get back again as did his people to see him. I do not know what vocation he had followed in civil life or what his appearance had been, mere boy that he was. But there was no doubt what the Army had done for him. Smart as paint, alert, with clear fearless eyes, he will never be a drone in the hive when he returns.

"I'm a Cockney, Sir, right down Cockney, and I wants to see 'ome and the 'ole Elephant again." And I hope he will. It was strange sitting talking to him of "Lunnon," as he steered the Ford over that impossible road. A matter of four miles we had gone when he looked back and pulled up. We had run out of sight of the convoy and "A tyre flat, I think, Sir." I got out, extracted my hold-all, and filled up our tobacco pouches. The second car, with another youngster at the wheel, hove in sight, and they set to work pumping up the tyre, but in the end had to change it. The rest of the convoy coming up, I transferred into the third van, and we started on again, the two receiving orders to push on and rejoin as soon as ready. There was sure to be plenty more of that kind of thing amongst us before we saw the lights of Salonika ahead. My new driver was quite a different type, an older man by far, hailing from Scotland, I think, but what part I did not gather. He displayed a queer mixture of the most daring driving and curious timidity. We absolutely crawled when there was anything in the nature of a drop or precipice on either side of the road and crept down the big hill. On the level, no matter what the surface might be, and it was always pretty awful, he would go at anything from 30 to 40 miles an hour. We must have spent fully as much time in the air as in contact with the road, the Ford often bounding from rock to rock after the fashion of a goat, till every bone in my anatomy ached. But owing to the pace at which he drove ahead, as soon as we left the mountains, we had to constantly pull up to await the convoy, when his language, muttered below his breath, was an eye-opener. The stoppages for punctures and so on were numerous and irritating.

Some miles before we reached the outskirts of Vodena we passed a French ammunition convoy. We were in a winding rocky defile, and they were a fine sight as they came clattering up the stony track. The men on the teams and the escort, all inured to war, were tanned and hard as nails, many of the fair Normandy type with flowing beards and moustaches, giving them a wild handsome appearance. The view of Vodena from this side is particularly beautiful. The town is strung out against the skyline, for the bluff drops sheer on the other side, as I have already described, with some 8 to 10 slender white minarets, below which nestle the red-tiled, white-faced houses amongst tall thin poplars and groves of oak and chestnut. In front stretches the undulating hilly country, either wild and rugged or with small cultivated areas dropping down in the direction of the town. As we enter the town itself we are once again in the narrow tortuous streets with the great rough cobbles, cut up with cross gullies every 15 to 20 yards, whilst the overhanging eaves almost entirely shut out the sun. Children of all shades of colour, from the fair Northern type through shades of yellow to a dark tan, swarm around and play the same old child's game of pretending to push each other in front of the car. In the centre of the town is a giant old tree, at the juncture of four roads where the market is held, and here the Salonika road takes a sharp bend to the right, leading on to the great hill. Some one had nailed up a paper sign to the tree, with the one word "Ostrovo" on it and an arrow. How many thousands of fighting men have read that one word, knowing that it meant the road to the firing line whence they might never return!

On the hill we met a Serbian infantry regiment, the

men clad in their French blue overcoats with khaki beneath. A fine serviceable lot they looked, the officers very smart and mostly riding. In the plain below we passed their transport, the carts of the French pattern.

The convoy "let 'em out," as they expressed it, on the more level road. Before reaching the Vertekop R.A.M.C. hospitals we came upon a Ford van on end, having gone through a broken bridge, or rather the place where the bridge had been many ages ago, into the river bed below. The bridge, a small affair, had been of two spans, with a strip of masonry wall built up in the river bed to take the spans. The top of the car rested against this wall, as the photograph depicts. Hard by sat its driver, a Tommy minus his helmet, but otherwise unharmed. We halted, each of our drivers got out of his car, glanced at the smash, and then went up and without a word solemnly shook hands with the hero of the accident. For of course he ought to have broken his neck. Apparently some eighteen hours before he was steering for Salonika at night, without doubt scorching, when his career was suddenly abruptly terminated in this fashion. He had forgotten this place. There were so many broken bridges with small deviations round them in the fields or scrub at the side of the road. He had missed this one!

We got into a block in the traffic near the big hospitals. It was a broken bridge under repair, marshes on either side of us, and so no hope of getting round. The French engineers said they would have the road open in a couple of hours. They had already been on the job for three hours. Five hours' stoppage of all communication with this part of the front, for this was the only direct road, as I have explained.

I met here an officer of one of the hospitals and a couple of the nurses. They had come out on a foraging expedition for fruit, etc., but were held up.

We were much amused here by watching a handful of poilus catching frogs in the marsh to serve as a dainty dish for their dinner. Frogs here grew to a large size and wore gorgeous livery, brilliant greens, yellows and browns, and already a score strung on a string had been captured. A five-foot stick, short string line with hook attached to end, and baited with a lump of dough, comprised the fisherman's outfit, the bait being dangled before the frog's nose as he lay just beneath the surface of the water; or more often the fisher endeavoured to get the hook and bait under the stomach or fore arm of the frog, and then by a sharp upward jerk to hook froggy up. Shrieks of laughter arose from the Frenchmen at each miss, or when froggy, agilely diving to the bottom, proved too much for his would-be captor. "Not 'avin any," was the way our own Tommies put it at each escape. Their remarks on the subject of eating frogs were delightful, if only for their caustic character.

At length the planks were laid across the beams, and without waiting for them to be nailed on the delayed traffic was let loose across and we continued our journey, making a deviation which cost us an hour to pick up the men's rations from an M.T. unit stationed somewhere off the road—no one was very sure where. These rations ought to have reached the men yesterday. Consequently they had to be fed by us, and the camp when I left it was almost foodless, if we except bully beef. That and a few sweet biscuits was about all they had when I departed a small glass potted-meat jar filled with the b.b. being all they could give me as provisions for the road. Rations

secured, we determined to run on as far as possible for the remaining hour of light and then have supper. Bread and jam was Tommy's meal. They offered me some of their bread, and magnificent stuff it was after over four days' course of b.b. and biscuit. The corporal politely refused my offer of bully. "No, thank you, Sir; we see plenty of that."

I watched the remains of a beautiful sunset gradually fading over the Vodena Hills, amongst which lay little Ostrovo, and night was upon us. "Give 'em a swing, boys," from the corporal (Good God! what an order compared with the old time—"Stand to your horses, boys. Prepare to mount. Mount!"), and we were off again. We had our head lights on now, and looking back the twin eyes at intervals on the unseen cars had a curiously uncanny appearance. I noticed this at the time, but the impression was far stronger in the wilder tracts in which we were subsequently to meet strings of them up country rushing up ammunition to the firing line. The sentry trouble began after dark. There were two main bridges over the Vardar River, the first we came to being known as the Chinaman's Bridge, as it was guarded by Annannese. As we approached this the Chinaman came out of his box and shouted out something. Tommy replied "Saloneeky," and continued advancing. Again the Chinaman shouted and took up a position in the middle of the road, bringing his rifle and bayonet down to the ready. Our head lights shone full on him and I didn't like his looks at all. I had seen in my time in the East quite enough of those "regrettable" incidents, with a dead officer or two as a result, not to be keen on adding another to the list. We still approached slowly, Tommy believing he had only to go on and keep shouting

“Saloneeky” to be allowed through. But the Chinaman didn’t mean it, and I saw his finger on the trigger. Sharply ordering the man to pull up and leaning out I shouted in French, “From Ostrovo to Salonika. Friends.” The Chinaman came up, inspected us and let us pass. I was told afterwards, what I full well realized at the time, that these Annannese were dangerous customers, shooting on the slightest provocation, aiming at the driver and usually hitting the passenger! An obstinate man is a curse on such occasions.

The next bridge was guarded by the French. The tactics of my driver were the same, to slowly approach, never pull up; and shout “Saloneeky” at intervals. The Frenchman had a lot to say and skipped about on the roadway in front of his bridge, the glare of our lights upon him, rifle with its long tapering bayonet in one hand, the other waving in the air. I could not catch a word till we were quite close, by which time, the sentry was at white or rather red heat. Suddenly I caught one word “Cavalerie.” “Cavalry.” I exclaimed, “Cavalry on the bridge. Back, man, back at once.” We reversed to the side of the road, leaving plenty of room, our head lights full on the bridge head. It was an inspiring sight we obtained and worthy of a Meissonier. A crack French cavalry regiment, newly landed, I fancy, on the march up to the Front. Great big men in light-coloured khaki jackets which shone almost white under our lights, steel helmets and jack-boots with long steel spurs. They carried rifle and bayonet and sword. The horses bore a very heavy equipment in addition to the long cavalry sword which was slung across the flank, kept in position by a girth so as to be out of the way and to prevent its jingling against the stirrup iron. The men were a hand-

some type for the most part, many with long flowing beards and moustaches, the growth of which appears a common habit of the French on active service—out of France at any rate. And they sat their horses, many of which were white or grey, not a good campaigning colour, with the careless easy grace of the cavalryman inured to campaigning. In full campaigning kit, it was a fine sight to see the troopers, as file after file came to the head of the bridge and so into the glare of our lights, fling up a hand to the helmet to shield the eyes and sway to the sudden movements of their steeds; then move onward through the band of strong light to disappear into the shadow and pass us as strong dim shapes. It was a magnificent spectacle. Some miles further on we met the regimental transport and its escort. They were halted at the side of the road for a rest, and as we slowly passed them one could take in every detail. If the French have many more cavalry regiments of this kind they should not do badly—that is, if cavalymen are to ever have a show in this war, which looks more than doubtful. But this lot may get their chance up in the Monastir Plain, where they should give a good account of themselves. Bulgar cavalry have been operating there recently, from all accounts—or rather rumours.

The rest of the journey was uneventful and we eventually arrived in Salonika at midnight.

The next four days were spent in a turmoil. We had heard a whisper of a special train having been promised for the carriage of our equipment, but I had scarcely credited such luck. As a matter of fact there was not an atom of truth in it.

Colonel Sondermeyer and his staff were ready to afford me all possible help, but the matter lay with the French.

They had promised the Serbian staff eight trucks, two a day for four days. This was the official promise and the official maximum. But it would only take from one-quarter to one-third of our equipment. I had brief interviews at G.H.Q. with the French Chef de Reseaux, a senior officer with the most suave and courteous manners, who informed me that such small matters were scarcely within his province, but went out of his way, with true French courtesy, to make inquiries; and subsequently with his chief staff officer, to whom he sent me. The latter was very sorry, but—eight trucks were all that could be spared. I realized that I was, to use a slang expression, “up against it.” It is impossible to mention names, unfortunately, but amongst the French, Serbian and English acquaintances, friends I would designate them, I had made, I thought a way might still be found. To one of the Frenchmen I explained the position of the personnel, away up there in the mountains with too few tents as yet to house them, with the bulk of their materials, including provisions, lying on the quay, and subsisting when I left, and at that moment for all I knew to the contrary, on bully beef and sweet biscuits. He screamed with laughter as I related my story—shut his eyes and roared—then opened them to take a glance at my serious face telling my story, for I was in deadly earnest then, shut them and roared again, mopping his brow the while (it was very hot and he was in shirt sleeves—the office kit). At length at the end he spluttered out, “Oh les dames Ecossaises et le bullee bif,” and went off again, wiping the tears from his eyes. To that fortunate description (for he proved a good friend) may be attributed the fact that in one way and another a good many more railway trucks than eight went off up country

loaded with hospital equipment. On the fourth day, when I looked to be in the town for several days more, the quite unexpected and powerful help of an English friend made a clean sweep of the rest. We worked from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. that day, the last waggons after being sealed up being hauled off from the docks to the railway station at 10 p.m. by a light engine sent for the purpose. It was a funny job transport work in Macedonia at that time—a purely hand-to-mouth existence. A couple of days later, even a day, and we could not have had a truck for love or money, for the big advance had begun on our wing, and the Salonika-Ostrovo Railway was closed to everything save the carriage of ammunition and military stores. Our waggons were the last to go up. For several weeks to come nothing outside the material for the fighting forces was carried. Truly Dame Fortune was kind to us.

I left the quay at 10 o'clock and returned to the hotel, where I packed up my kit and got from the proprietor the provisions previously ordered to be put up for me, since nothing in the way of food would be procurable till the camp at Ostrovo was reached and the time the train would take to get up there was in the lap of the Gods. A Salonika cab was fetched, a vehicle reminiscent of the ticca gharry of Calcutta and the East, driven by a Greek, more extortionate even than any of the evil tribe. We reached the station at 11 p.m. and got a seat, one of the only two remaining in the one first-class carriage on. The train did not leave till 12.37 a.m., but I had been warned to arrive in time. Four Serbian officers occupied the carriage and a very nice set of companions they proved themselves to be. Two had answered my queries as to whether there was room in

French, so I felt relieved on the score of future conversation, my Serbian being confined to a few words picked up from the Serbian soldiers on the quay. They were nice, these Serbian soldiers. I had a most hearty farewell from the section who had been on guard over the dump on the quay for three weeks. They had had a precious hard time of it during that period, and yet I really think they were as sorry to see the last of me as I was to leave them. However, some of us met again up country later on.

I took stock of my companions. Opposite me sat a colonel wearing the Serbian decoration. Next to him a big broad-shouldered man of aristocratic countenance, a cavalry officer. Next to him a different type of man, also a colonel of infantry, evidently of the peasant class, for he treated the others, juniors as well as the senior colonel, with deference. Opposite him sat a fat smallish man with a round rubicund jovial face, and head cropped à la Bosche. He turned out one of those jolly fellows, met with in every country and every walk of life, whom nothing puts out, always full of talk and wit. He maintained two-thirds of the conversation, and read extracts from the French and Serbian papers, with many comments, till one after the other, his companions finally gave up smoking cigarettes and fell asleep, coiled up on their seats in the most extraordinary attitudes. I could not sleep for some time, overtired I suppose from my long day in the sun. A fifth man, a Serbian subaltern, got in before we left and fell asleep almost at once, rather overpowered by the company of so many seniors, I fancy. The crowd outside below us, there was no platform, proved interesting. It was entirely composed of French and Serbian soldiers, all fully accoutred, a great part

of whom were travelling by the train ; a happy-go-lucky throng, gaily chattering and laughing and filling up the carriages "on their own," for there were no officers in command to tell them off after our orderly fashion.

We pulled slowly out, punctually for a wonder, the countryside for the first few miles a sea of tents, brilliant under the light of a full moon.

I woke up just as dawn was breaking. We were halted at a station. My companions were still asleep. I looked out. The door on our side had been open all night. The colonel had tried to shut it once, but there was something wrong with its works ; so it was left. There was more important work than mending broken doors to be done. But imagine the thoughts of a guard on one of our fast expresses at home at a door of one of his carriages being left open all night to bang at its sweet will ! The eastern horizon was blood-red with dark streaks across it. Just opposite our carriage stood a sentry leaning on his rifle, fast asleep. Some Serbian soldiers walked up and down the platform, others were asleep in the station yard, whilst beyond on the road a French battery of light field guns, men, animals and guns covered with white dust, were passing at a slow trot. By their dusty and travel-stained appearance they had evidently accomplished a long march. The rays of the rising sun threw them into strong relief, glinting on sabre, bit and spur. I sank back in my seat and wondered when we should move. The Serbian officers gradually awakened and I then discovered that we had been there for three to four hours and were only thirty kilometres from Salonika. These officers were apparently only going to Vertekop and should have nearly arrived there by now. However, one had learnt not to worry at delays. I got out to have

a look round. The station house, the only building to be seen, was covered with a giant wisteria in full bloom. In the yard was a drinking pipe spouting water, and two young Serbian cavalry officers were having a wash. I proceeded to do likewise, and meeting the French station-master afterwards, asked him how long we should be there. "Two hours, monsieur." "Is there a café?" "Yes, monsieur." "Where?" I asked. No house was to be seen save a long tumble-down building about fifty yards away, looking like a cattle shed; but I now noticed a door and small window near the centre of the building. Said the station-master, "The café is in that!" I started off towards it, but remembering my Serbian friends, returned to the station. "The station-master says we shall be here two hours and there is a café." "A café!" they exclaimed as one man and jumped up. Led by the senior colonel, we approached the building and a nearer look was not inviting. It was a hovel. The colonel pushed open the door and entered, followed by the rest of us. And what a sight met our gaze! Picture a room about 14 by 12 feet, mud-walled, low-ceiled, provided with small dirty fixed wooden tables of the crudest construction, a few short forms and stools, and packed with French and Serbian soldiery evidently off the train. To the left of the door as you entered was the window, hermetically sealed. What the atmosphere consisted of I could not say. It was a thick grey with smoke, and certainly did not consist of any variety of air I had previously made acquaintance with. Across the corner next the window was a tiny bar; behind it in the corner a raised fireplace about three feet six inches high, on which the coffee was prepared, and between the two was mine host, a tall, sallow-complexioned, black-haired,

shifty-faced Jewish Greek with a smirk—half-leer, half-grin—on his forbidding features. On the counter were some half-dozen bottles of various fiery liquors, of which old cognac, or so the label called it, was the only one recognisable. At our entrance mine host hurriedly came out of the bar, bowed deeply, and put on a broader smirk. The soldiers nearest us rose and quickly shifted, so as to leave one of the dirty little tables and a few stools vacant. The rest took no notice of us, save that the momentary lull in the conversation ended in a louder row than ever. Said the major, who instinctively took command here, “What drinks? Coffee and cognac?” They appeared safest—in fact, the only ones. The coffee was made *à la Turque*, of course. You see nothing else in this country. The order was soon fulfilled, tiny Turkish coffee cups, cognac, and a thick dirty tumbler of doubtful water being placed in front of each of us. Nothing to be had in the way of food. The coffee was fair, the cognac, in glasses of liberal size, was strong and fiery. I don’t think any of us noticed the first glass. My companions drank theirs at a gulp, then took a gulp of water and then the coffee. I learnt a lot about the present positions on the Western wing (our wing, for the hospital was attached to the third Serbian Army), both French and Serbian, of which I shall have something to say later. Neither of the colonels spoke French, but the other three did. Very soon the senior colonel invited us to drink with him, but that second cognac was my last. I thought two raw cognacs at 6 a.m.—it not being our habit to start thus early—was enough. “*C’est la Guerre*,” said the major, in offering a third one. They went the round, however, and for myself the coffee was very welcome. They resolutely refused to let me bear

my share in these early morning potations, when the station-master appeared at the door to announce the departure of the train, the Major saying, "You found the café and it is well that we should pay." The way the men drank that fiery cognac as if it had been water, was extraordinary. One old Serb soldier sitting near us was addressed by the colonel. He had apparently been in a recent fight up in the Moglena Mountains and gave a graphic description of it, sitting half turned to us, smoking a cigarette and sipping his cognac in free and easy fashion as man to man, but without a suspicion of cheek in his attitude. It was taken as a matter of course. The men had thinned out before we left, when the door opened and a Greek appeared with the inn's daily bread—a dozen flat Serbian loaves. The remaining soldiers jumped up and fell upon the man, but the major, with the quickness born of long campaigning, had one under his arm in a twinkling and, laughing, went out with it, throwing the man a coin. We got into our carriage and the train got under way. "Now we'll have some dejeuner," I remarked, and proceeded to get out my stock of provisions. They all exclaimed at this—"What about your dinner? You may not get to Ostrovo to-night." I retorted with the Major's remark, "C'est la Guerre." I had half a dozen boiled eggs, one apiece, a lot of ham, butter, cheese, and a long French roll. My beer I found had been left behind, or more probably the cabby had stuck to it. But the major produced all they had between them, save the Serbian loaf—a bottle of good claret. We made a most excellent dejeuner, and they were profuse in their thanks for what was after all a very small return for their kindness. A Russian regiment was halted for the morning meal close

to the station at Verria—a magnificent lot of men, most interested in seeing Serbian soldiers. At Vertekop I parted with my pleasant companions, who greatly regretted that they were not coming up to the front. “But we’ll soon be following.”

Here I found to my disgust that the first-class carriage went no further. To get up the mountainous part of the line the train was cut down to a minimum, and I had to travel in one of the ambulance waggons, the only place left. The other three and a half of the present one were filled with some of our bales and boxes. This was one of the ways I had been getting my material up country for the past four days, as soon as I heard that these four ambulance waggons returned empty daily to Ostrovo. Picturesque from a scenic point of view as this section of the line is, it was a wearying journey. The train, up the steep inclines, goes a bare four miles an hour, halts at intervals, the engines panting and groaning like human beings. The railway is a purely strategic one. It could never pay, and what the cost of building it was I should hesitate to say. The viaducts, short in length but of considerable height, are numerous and must alone have added immensely to the expense; as also the numerous rock cuttings. It is lucky that the Bulgarians did not take Ostrovo and get down here. If they had blown up a few of the viaducts there would have been no campaign this summer on the Western front, that is certain. They are all guarded now by Serbians, but I was told that they had been left unguarded till quite recently, difficult as it is to give credence to the tale.

As we climbed higher and got further into the hills, we picked up the music of the guns again, and as we drew nearer Ostrovo their volume sounded louder than when

I left six days before. From all accounts I have got back just in time. The first advance is now about to begin, and glad I was to have got back before the start. We arrived in Ostrovo that night, and Mrs. Harley, whose transport unit had made their headquarters at the station, kindly gave me a lift out to the camp.

CHAPTER IX

CAMP OSTROVO—THE BATTLE OF GORNICEVO

I ARRIVED back just in time !

The Big Push by the Serbians on this wing commenced, and that it was one of first-class importance was exemplified by the fact that General Sarrail arrived at Ostrovo the following morning and the Prince Regent of Serbia at mid-day. I have said that I noticed the difference in the volume of sound from the big guns as we approached Ostrovo. They were hard at it all night on the crests to the north and west of us without intermission. Early in the morning Archibald (the anti-aircraft) opened fire on a Bosche or Bulgar aeroplane flying over our camp, but did not bag it. All day the guns thundered round us, and an attack was to be made at night by the Serbians on the Bulgar position on the Gornicevo ridge, the eastern limit of their recent advance from the Monastir plain.

There is a small rocky hill at the back of and to the north of our camp site, or the part of it feasible for pitching tents on, for the ridge is within our boundary. My duties kept me too busy in the camp superintending the tent pitching to allow me to ascend the hill and watch the guns at work during the day, but I promised myself a visit there after dark.

The unit had been hard at work during my absence.

We had sent up in the first consignment despatched after my return to Salonika, a number of the staff tent bales and poles, and consequently a few more of these had been pitched, and the personnel had now sufficient tents up to put them all under cover, though they were still pretty crowded and, I was not long left in ignorance, more than a bit uncomfortable. But then you can't expect to come up to the front and get all the fun and have feather-beds to lie on or hot water to wash in for that matter—or hot baths. But the baths question or their absence remained a sore one for many a day—though there was always the beautiful Lake Ostrovo with its gorgeous colouring to bathe in, even though you did sink well over the ankles in soft slimy mud to get into it, and the temperature of the water compared very unfavourably with the soft warm luxurious Mediterranean. Two of my doctor friends bathed in it, however, for days after their arrival.

Work had already commenced on the wards, two of the twenty ward tents having been put up under the supervision of a young Serb engineer officer. They had to come down again, however. For one thing the plan of the hospital portion of the camp was changed and changed for the better by Dr. Bennett after we had consulted long and earnestly on the subject.

We had made plans at home, more than one, indicating exactly where each tent should be. But the plans were made for level ground, and they were made on the definite understanding that they should be scrapped if the ground did not fit the plan, the only way to put up a moderately large camp of some seventy to eighty tents like ours. All our plans were scrapped, as will be described later. The second reason for repitching the two ward

tents lay in the fact that tent-pitching is an art only to be acquired by long practice. Place the pegs wrong or start pitching a big tent, or a small one for that matter, without first definitely settling upon the place for the guide pegs and ropes, and the whole erection will have the appearance of a badly built house of cards made by a child ; and moreover it will share the same fate in the next high wind. Most of our ground had to be levelled before the tents could be erected on the sites chosen, and that meant a lot of heavy work. Parties were on this work all day, but one working party re-erected the two ward tents. No mess tent was got up, nor could we give time to put one up for several days. The unit picnicked in the open near the camp fire, a wood fire. How the cooking staff under Miss Kerr grappled with their own special difficulties was always a source of amazement to me. Cooking for sixty people is no joke. We had several showers of rain that day to add to the discomfort. One at supper time. The second, a big heavy one, came on in the late afternoon, and all hands were turned on to digging drains round the tents, many of which were flooded out, including Dr. Bennett's, who was lying seedy on her cot, a not surprising result of her three weeks' strenuous work in Salonika.

The guns increased their intensity of fire towards nightfall, in preparation for the final attack on the Gornicevo ridge and village which was to shortly take place. We had been warned that we might be bombed.

Before describing what we saw of this fight, I will briefly indicate the position of the Allied lines at this juncture. A connected narrative of the campaign between the beginning of August and third week in November will be found in a later chapter.



DR. SCOTT AND S.W.H. AMBULANCES AT THE GORNICEVO-KRUSOGRAD ROAD
DRESSING STATION, OCT. 1915



EFFECT OF SERBIAN GUNFIRE ON THE STONE-BUILT HOUSES IN GORNICEVO

At the commencement of August, the Bulgars made up their minds to come out of their fortified lines just on the other side of the Greek frontier and attack the Allies, whom they were fully aware were making strenuous preparations to attack them.

From the latter part of July fierce fighting had been taking place up in the Moglena Mountains, to the north of Vodena, in which the Serbian Army Corps had taken up positions facing the Bulgars, the Serbian line stretching westward below the Kajmaktealan crest, an exceedingly strong position situated immediately north of our camp, and from there on over the mountains to Verbeni and Florina in the Monastir plain. About the middle of August the Bulgars endeavoured to turn the Allies' western flank by advancing south down the Monastir plain, driving in the Serbian outposts in Verbeni and Florina, capturing Banitsa in the S.E. corner of the plain, and then advancing up the hills and taking Gornicevo village and crest overlooking Lake Ostrovo, their line stretching from here south to the western shore of the Lake. In this advance they had captured the length of railway running from Florina S.E. to Ekshisu, and a little to the east of the latter. The left wing of the Serbs had taken up a position on a lower crest to the east of Gornicevo ridge immediately above the Lake. The French were advancing up the Lake road and railway and also by the Verria—Kozani route, thus supporting the Serbian left. The Serbs' objective to-night was to recapture the Gornicevo ridge and village.

After supper (we dined at noon and supped at 6.30), I climbed up the small rocky ridge, a matter of 200 to 300 yards only, from which a complete view of Kajmaktealan

to the north and the Gornicevo ridge across the lake to the west is obtained, the camp being encircled by mountains all in full view from this eminence. The centre of operations to-night, now commencing, lay on the western ridge, only desultory artillery fire taking place to the north. The crest of the hills to the west could scarcely be more than four or five miles away as the crow flies, and this line was lit up by the flashes of the guns.

Our first battle was commencing.

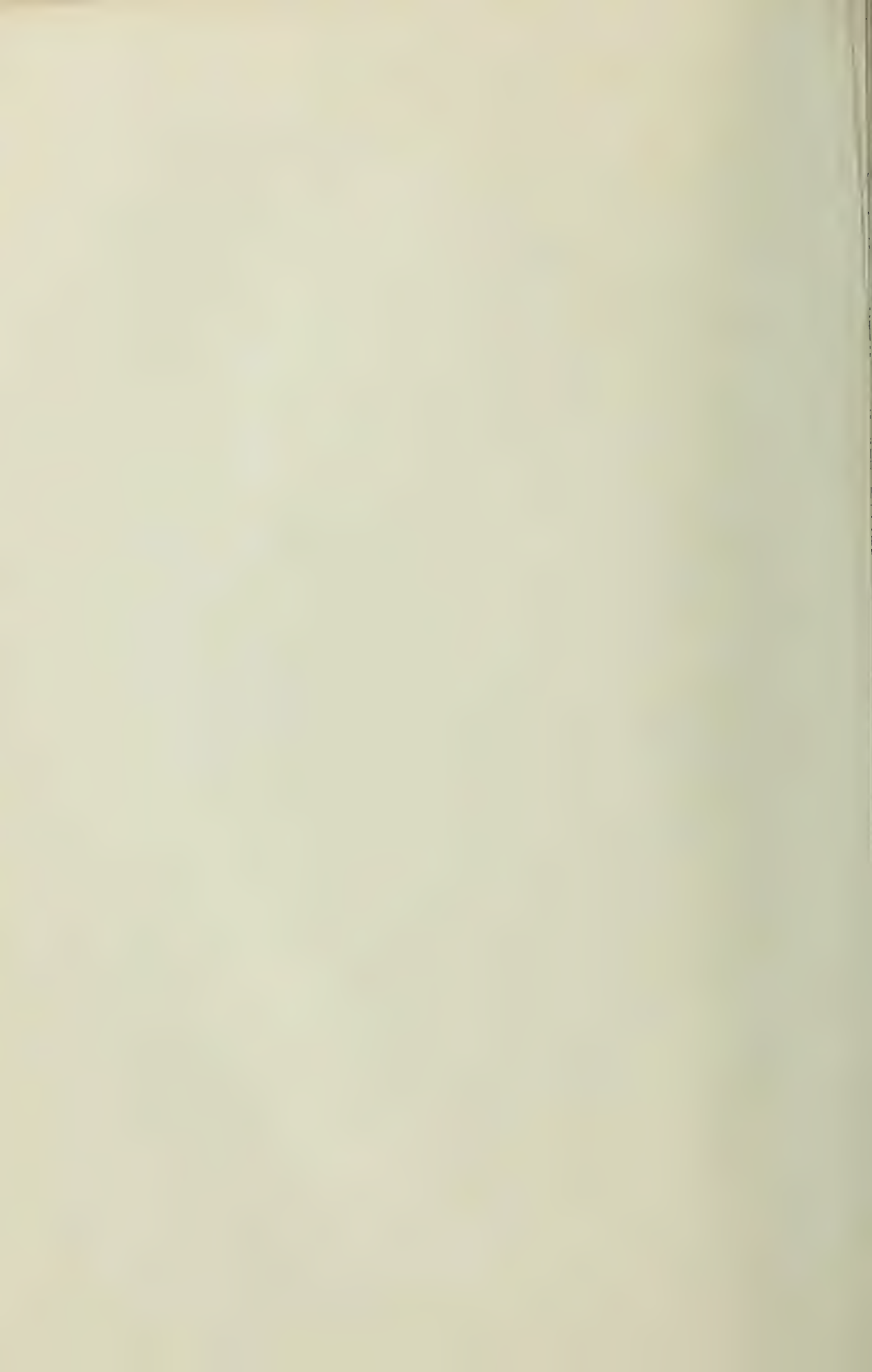
Cloud masses lay here and there in the valley below ; in the east the moon had not yet risen above a bank of clouds on the horizon. A number of Serbian soldiers sat about on the rocks, men from the half-company of pioneers told off to the camp for tent-pitching, etc., smoking and talking in low voices. I had not been up there five minutes, in what by contrast may be termed a lull in the artillery fire, when the guns opened again in real earnest, and the whole mountain crest and down the sides was lit up by almost continuous flashes, as guns of all calibre, including the French 75's, which were most numerous, joined in. There appeared to be only two really heavy guns—howitzers. I saw these a day or two later being dragged by motor lorries down a vile mountain road *en route* to their new position against Kajmaktalan. When they spoke there was no mistaking their voice, and one could hear the great shells go whirring and rumbling on their journey. Shortly after the first machine-guns joined in, but soon ceased. A half-hour elapsed and then the real attack commenced due west. A gust of rifle fire suddenly opened and passed along the crest, to be at once joined by the rat-tat-tat-tat of the machine-guns. The whole crest and upper part of

the hillside was lit with a continuous flashing, whilst star shells—white, green and yellow—soared up along the length of the line. Ten minutes of pandemonium, and then quite suddenly the light went out and the rifle fire ceased, to be taken up, however, almost immediately on the left. The guns joined in again, with scrappy rifle and machine-gun fire to the right. One endeavoured with glasses to pierce across the intervening space to make out what was going on on that open rocky mountain side; for of cover for the Serbians in the advance there was none. Men were falling over there and were at death grips, and but little quarter would be given or asked for. For this is a true racial fight this between the Serb and Bulgar, and the former are embittered by the ruin to which their country is being subjected under Bulgar occupation. Undying enmity rules here, and the Serbs, fighting to get back into their country, are in a dangerous mood. And whilst men were at death grips before us just across the lake on our side the scene was a very peaceful one. The moon, now risen above the cloud bank, flooded with silver the slope in front, covered with coarse grass and scattered low outcrops of rock. Over the top of the low ridge in front a strip of the lake showed, turned to molten silver, and beyond reared up the dark hill on whose sides and crest the struggle was being enacted. To the north grim Kajmakcalan, so soon to be the scene of a giant struggle, was hidden in a black storm cloud; whilst south on the other side of the French aviation camp, only separated from us by the railway line, two searchlights placed in the hills immediately above the flying camp searched the heavens for aeroplanes. But for hell let loose on the opposite crest, the scene was as beautiful as a moonlit stretch

of mountainous country ever is. Now one paid but scant attention to it. The fight on yonder crest held one enthralled. Again the rifle and machine-gun fire died down and the big guns took up the game, redoubling their energies. I saw the battle field some days later. It was the wire entanglement, a stout erection a couple of yards broad and cris-crossed with stout wire armed with three to four barbs—a devilish place to have to try and cross, that was giving the trouble. The artillery was neither sufficiently heavy nor abundant enough to smash it up. It was only broken in a very few places. The pluck of the Serbs in advancing in the open up that barren rocky mountain side and carrying that crest, the shallow trench cut out of the broken rock on the Bulgar side of the wire presented no difficulties, was magnificent. But all this could not be seen to-night. For a quarter of an hour the guns kept at it, firing salvoes in unison, in some cases, with ear-splitting crashes. The moon suddenly clouded over and a smart shower of rain fell, but only on us luckily. The crest remained cloudless throughout the fight, which was extraordinarily fortunate; for in these mountains the whole scene might have been so easily blotted out by misty clouds. It got very cold after the rain, but none of us noticed it. The rifle-firing restarted on the extreme left, kept going for some time, and then was overpowered by the pandemonium which quite suddenly broke out immediately in front on the highest part of the crest, just in the neighbourhood of Gornicevo village, in fact. Every form of gun, rifle and bomb took up the tale here, following the appearance of a red star shell, which suddenly soared aloft. This attack was proceeding on a considerable front, the dull sounds of the guns and the



THE BARRED WIRE ENTANGLEMENT AFTER THE CAPTURE OF THE GORNICEVO RIDGE BY THE SERBIANS. ONLY
SMALL GATES WERE CUT IN THE WIRE THROUGH WHICH THE SERBIANS ADVANCED. THE SHALLOW TRENCH
PROTECTED BY LENGTHS OF STONE WALL IS SHOWN IN THE FOREGROUND



sharper crackle of the rifle fire reverberating amongst the mountains, and echoing and re-echoing from many a rocky face and peak. It was the repeated clashing of the advancing and returning waves of sound that gave rise to the prodigious din, adding enormously to the sound of the guns actually engaged. Was it the final assault? we wondered. This attack lasted much longer than any of its predecessors, was far more fiercely contested, and when it did die down it was not followed in this length by any others. Isolated points were attacked or continued the fight, but the main action here was evidently over. I glanced round at the Serbs during its progress. They were all standing motionless, sharply silhouetted against the brilliant moonlight, for the cloud had passed, necks craned forward, their eyes glistening in their heads and faces drawn, as they watched that fight and pictured the scenes well known to them all, for they had been in the previous fights in Serbia, which were taking place. Although minor fusillades burst out both to the left and right of the main centre, once it became evident that that was over a voluble conversation broke out amongst the Serbians. They were evidently under the impression that the advance had been successful and that Gornicevo had been captured, and with it some thirty guns.

Next morning we knew that this was the case. Counter-attacks in this country there could be none, as once the only line of defence was broken and taken, a hurried retreat on the part of the enemy in this case to the hills to north and north-west, was all that was open to them. The rumble of the guns with momentary bursts of rifle fire lasted most of the night, but the real show was over. As I turned to descend the hill our little camp, of less than a score

of tents as yet, looked very peaceful, their brand-new canvas gleaming brilliantly white 'neath the moonlight against the dark foliage of the trees. And yet so soon it was to be full of wounded and anguish, of operations skilfully performed, and of death.

A few days later I went up to Gornicevo to the dressing station with one of the ambulances going up to bring back wounded. The work of our Ford ambulances was wonderful, as amazing as were the awful mountain tracks they had to operate on. They merit a chapter to themselves later on.

Ostrovo village is situated in the N.E. corner of the lake above a sandy waste, containing the deepest and most penetrating fine sand it has ever been my lot to meet. It beats the Egyptian and Baluchistan deserts. This sandy waste at the foot of the village was always occupied by camping troops, and the sand was thus constantly in motion in swirling dust wreaths, bad enough under a hot sun, but far worse under a strong breeze.

The road up to the Gornicevo ridge and village after leaving Ostrovo skirts the north edge of Lake Ostrovo through the deep sand, and then takes up the mountain side through a couple of rocky defiles, one so long and steep that the cars had to be halted to cool once or twice ; they also got flooded with oil from the bumping from rock to rock, the brakes gave out, punctures were too common to record, and every ill to which cars are heir, and other new ones, arose with maddening frequency. Before mounting to the steep Gornicevo ridge a lower ridge is passed. Along this the Serbians took up their stand when they fell back from Gornicevo in August. To attack the Bulgars they had to advance down this ridge, cross a few stony fields in a hollow, and then climb

up the long rocky face of the hillside, absolutely bare but for a low scrub here and there which afforded no shelter, to attack the position protected by the stout barbed wire entanglement which stretched right across the mountains for miles just below the far side of the crest. The makeshift trenches of the Serbs could scarcely be dignified by this name. Small shallow excavations protected by low hastily-built walls of rocks or stones or sungars, after the Afridi pattern, the gun pits being little better. One viewed this area of operations with astonishment, for it seemed impossible that men could advance over it in the face of the murderous fire of modern weapons and reach the crest above, especially when, as was the case here, the artillery support was very weak. As one approaches the ridge a prominent white square building standing alone on the crest just off the road becomes visible. This made a fine target for the Serbian gunners and is now but a shell, the wire running just in front of it. The road or track, for it had scant resemblance to a road, was blocked with transport of every description, ammunition caissons and carts with teams of six and eight horses, horses, mules, donkeys, small powerful French motor lorries, and Ford vans carrying ammunition. Parties of soldiers and individuals mounted and on foot toiled upwards, and a Serbian infantry regiment on the way to the front took an interminable time to get past in the jam and confusion of that narrow rocky mountain way. All the aftermath of a battle was littered round—shell cases, piles of them in heaps or scattered about over the road and the sides of the hills, rifle ammunition, trench helmets and caps, knapsacks and clothing, with here and there dead artillery horses. Now and then small cemeteries were

passed with neatly cemented graves surmounted by little crosses, made during the previous months of the Serbian occupation. There were others of more recent origin, little hurriedly-made mounds with a roughly-made cross on them, which told only too poignantly their recent formation.

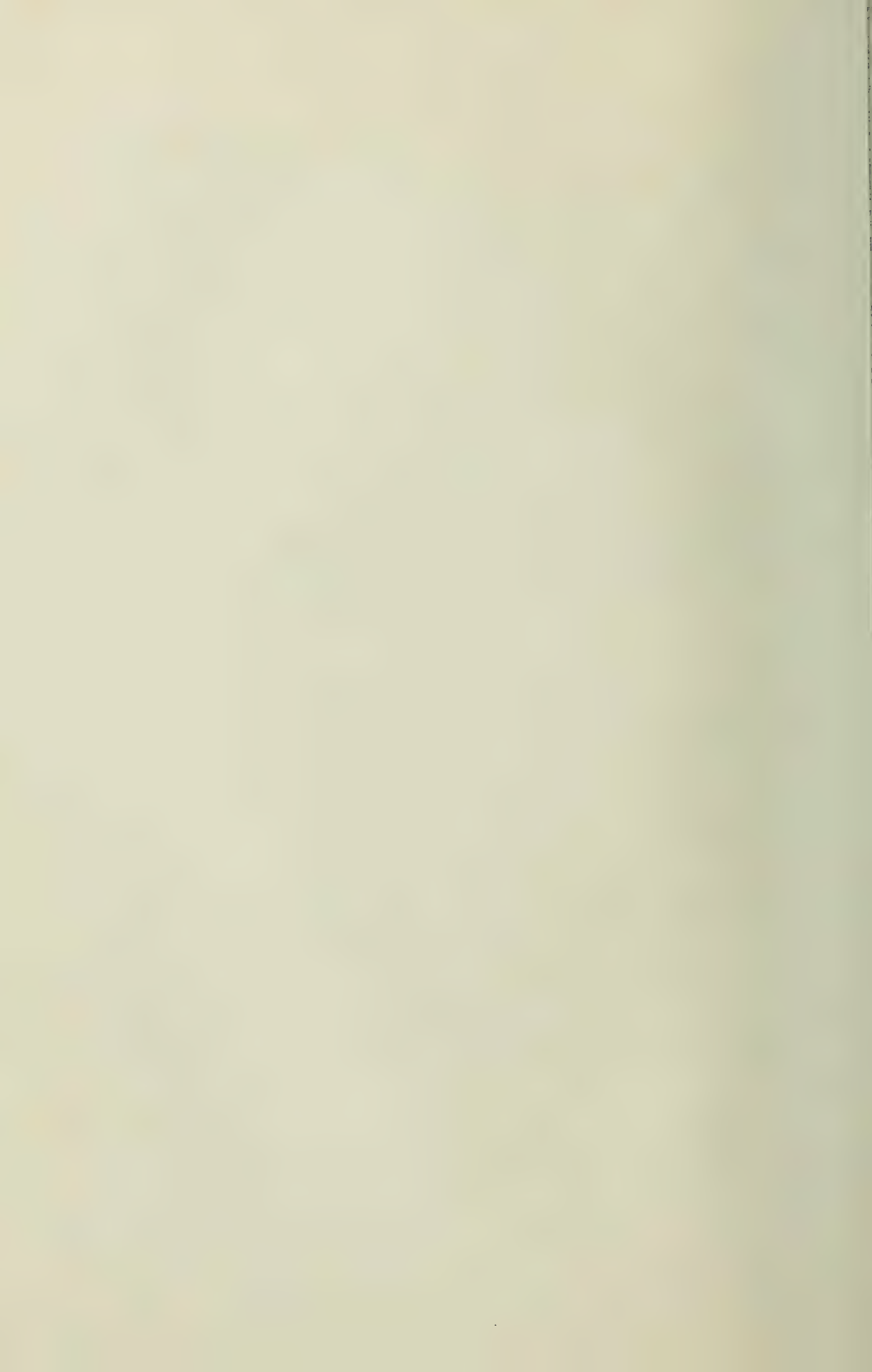
The road improved near the crest of the hill and we ran over the top past the roofless white house, the walls full of shell holes, and came into view of Gornicevo village, a long pretty little place, nestling in a fold in the hills, the houses of brick or rubble, with red tile roofs, the tiles placed in vertical rows. There is one big square-towered edifice, the church, of the shape usual in these parts. The inhabitants are Greeks, a poor lot, pro-Bulgar. The Serbs say that the inhabitants killed all the Serbian wounded when the latter had to retreat last month, and I can well believe it of them if looks go for anything. Some of the houses had been knocked about by gun fire, but the village had suffered wonderfully little. On the hillside at the back of it the line of Bulgar trenches and the wire entanglement were visible and we walked up to inspect them. We went through the outskirts of the village and then climbed the rough hillside beyond. The trenches were shallow affairs dug out of the almost solid rock, never more than five feet deep, and their preparation must have been hard work. They were protected to some extent by short lengths of rough, loosely built stone walls. The barbed-wire entanglement was evidently relied on as the chief protection, erected at some fifteen to fifty yards in front of the trench. The few holes cut through it were easily discernible, and as the Serbs topped the ridge in front, it must have been a murderous business before they got the Bulgars on



THE SHELL OF THE WHITE HOUSE ON THE GORNICEVO CREST, WITH WIRE ENTANGLEMENT, ALMOST INTACT, IN FRONT. THE MEN ARE FRENCH



WOUNDED SERBIANS GETTING INTO CARTS TO BE CARRIED TO THE CASUALTY CLEARING STATION AT OSTROVO GORNICEVO-KRUSOGRAD ROAD DRESSING STATION



the run. The fighting, they told us, was terrific, and nothing but the spirit of revenge and deadly hatred animating the Serbs could have made that advance a possibility. What their losses were I never learnt, but our doctors know what the wounds were like. The poor little dressing station here, consisting of a handful of small bell tents, was overflowing with wounded. With the exception of a few carts, the ambulances of Mrs. Harley's transport column stationed in Ostrovo village and our own were the only ones dealing with them.

The trenches and ground round were littered with battle debris—Bulgar cartridges in thousands, shell cases, unexploded shells, clothing, Bulgar caps, belts, knapsacks, pouches, gas masks, battered trench helmets and broken rifles. Only the serviceable rifles and bayonets had been already collected. Close by the white house the guns taken in the fight were parked before being sent down to Ostrovo. I picked up a brand-new Turkish knapsack taken from the Turks by the Bulgars in the war four years ago and now served out to the Bulgarian Infantry. And the Bulgars and Turks now Allies! Wonder what they really think of each other?

CHAPTER X

GETTING UP THE CAMP. THE FALL OF FLORINA

It was a rough, hard life the Scottish women led during the first few weeks up at Ostrovo; and all honour to them that they went through with it cheerfully. The life was all the harder because the pressure of work was incessant and long hours were essential to the fulfilment of their part of the business of war.

The Battle of Gornicevo settled the matter. The wounded were lying out on the mountain side, and it was imperative that they should be got to a hospital. The erection of the ward tents had to take precedence over everything in order that the hospital might be opened without delay. The comfort of the unit had therefore to be relegated to a secondary place till the other piece of work had been put through.

The camp was situated some three miles from Ostrovo and the railway station, and as the station-master had decided that trains could not be stopped as they passed the camp to unload waggons, the latter were subsequently run back with a light engine and unloaded by the Serbian working parties. This had been the procedure during my absence, but they had never had more than three waggons to deal with at any one time. Our

last lot comprised eight, and this necessitated turning out every available man and woman in the camp to help in unloading. Half an hour was all the time allotted to us for the job, on the expiry of which the French guard had orders to take the trucks back to Ostrovo whether empty or no. It was a strenuous piece of work that, undertaken in the hottest part of the day. Two of the doctors, Drs. Scott and Muncaster, turned out to assist the checkers (for the benefit of the uninitiated, who may not quite realize what this means, I may say that the doctors of a hospital are the Brass Hats of the unit), thereby showing, as they did over the tent pitching, and in many other ways, that the women officers of a unit are every bit as ready as the British officer to take their coats off. No, I don't mean that—take their gloves off. No, a man can't express it, but you know what I mean—and work in with the rank-and-file. Some of the nurses also gave yeoman help, and the orderlies worked with their usual grit. We found that unloading eight waggons, four of them fifteen-ton ones, was no picnic. The tent flooring alone ran to some 650 odd pieces each 7 feet by 3 feet. Everything was dumped out on to the side of the line, and we got finished in three-quarters of an hour, the guard, a very nice Frenchman, giving us the extra time, but slyly blowing his horn at intervals, just to keep us up to the mark. Our one lorry worked all day for the next three days transferring the stuff to the camp a quarter of a mile away, and that gigantic dump remained the bane of our lives for many a week to come, any bales or boxes required being invariably at the bottom. It may be said here that our equipment was as near perfect as man could devise when unknown conditions are considered.

And the praise for this is due to the fine organisation of the Scottish Women's Hospitals. Too high praise cannot be given to the methods upon which the Committee in Edinburgh, presided over by Miss S. E. S. Mair, carry out their work, nor to the indefatigable manner and efficiency in which the organising secretary, Miss Kemp (whose health broke down under the great strain, Miss May taking her place), Dr. Russell, and that hard-working lady in charge of the equipment, Miss Swanston (who stuck me with that disreputable bundle of tools, by the way), carried out their duties. When one finds one's self up at the Front in the position our unit achieved one realised how much we were indebted to this fine organisation.

The packing of our equipment by the various firms who had supplied it was in nearly every instance well done, and we lost scarcely anything by breakage, in spite of the vicissitudes which it experienced before finally arriving at its destination.

In fact, owing to the fine checking work of the orderlies, we only lost two pieces of tent flooring out of the whole outfit. These got smashed on the quay. We took up the remains and were glad to have them, wood being at a premium.

We now had our work cut out for us. Instead of a base hospital we had become a Casualty Clearing Station; or would be, as soon as we were ready to take in wounded. Only the tiny dressing stations lay between us and the firing line.

The ward tents were twenty in number, and passage ways connecting the tents had been provided. These were novel in one point, for a skeleton wood arrangement in the form of a pent-house roof had been provided

for them, so that when fitted between two tents the staff could walk from one to the other without stooping as is usually necessary when the connecting way is merely roofed with a horizontal strip of canvas. The latter, besides being too low, collects water during rain, sags and drops some of it down your neck if you incidentally bump it with your head. The arrangement of the wards decided on by the C.M.O. was as follows: there were to be five wards consisting of four tents apiece, each pair connected by a passage way. Each half ward formed, therefore, a unit under the charge of a sister who had two others to help her. The tent flooring, in spite of the trouble it had been to get it up country, was an inestimable boon, making for cleanliness, dryness and warmth, both of high value on our clayey soil. But it came near to being scrapped; for it was the least important and valuable part of the equipment, and I had determined to scrap it, leave it behind to take its chance on the quay, if it appeared the least likely to impede getting the rest of the material up to Ostrovo. Fifty odd pieces were left behind, but retrieved later.

Each tent took ten beds. The ward, therefore, consisted of forty beds, and the hospital of two hundred. But there were other necessities besides the wards, the first and most important being the reception tent, in which the wounded were taken straight from the ambulances, their clothes removed, the men washed and clad in hospital kit before being transferred to the wards. How this tent got its appellation it is difficult to say. To the lay mind a reception tent is associated with very different and usually festive (or solemn official) functions. Then came the operating tent and its companion the sterilising tent in importance, and lastly the X-ray tents.

And each ward had to have its small companions in which to keep the ward utensils and so on. A clothing store tent for the kit of the wounded brought in and a mortuary formed the purely hospital part of the camp. But that was not all. A store tent for the hospital stores,—this the administrator's department; a store tent for the matron, a dispensary, laboratory, and a mess tent also had to go up, and of course each was considered the most indispensable and urgent part of the camp by its own department. The rest of the camp may be omitted as not of the first importance, with the exception of the sanitary arrangements, the department of the sanitary engineer, and these gave a lot of trouble and entailed a lot of very hard work. Had we been an R.A.M.C. unit with plenty of orderlies, or even had we had a company of Serbs, the job would not have been quite so complex. But with our small Serbian force (each day a certain proportion were down with fever and so off work, and more could not be spared from the fighting line) the question as to which tents should go up first was an extremely delicate one, and came up each morning (and once or twice during the day!) for fresh consideration. There were no two opinions about the wards and the reception tent. They were imperative, and, with the exception of working parties engaged in levelling the various sites determined on for the different elements of the camp, the men were concentrated on these.

The days were pretty hard, but extremely interesting. Awake at dawn; breakfast 6.30; dinner 12, siesta till 2 (if possible); tea 3.30; and supper at 6.30.

These meals were partaken of in the open for the first ten days, as we had no time to give to getting up the

mess tent. Amongst the minor discomforts of this period and for some time after were the wasps. They were in myriads ; came from the rocky hill at the back of us and turned up regularly at meals in their thousands. We also had flies. But the wasps ate the flies and so mitigated that nuisance, a serious one in the big R.A.M.C. hospitals in the plains, where flies, sand, and a hot sun combined to make life insupportable. We were better off than that. But these wasps ! If the unit would only have foregone eating jam, as I besought them to do, we should not have been in so bad a case ; for the wasps were only too ready to lose themselves ecstatically in the jam. But the unit would not give up its jam. It was almost a tragedy when the quiet Miss Jack, who I am sure had never harmed a living thing, unintentionally ate a wasp—I mean put one inadvertently into her mouth with a piece of bread and jam, and it stung her on the tongue, a most painful business. Towards the end of September the cold killed off the wasps, but the Macedonian insect world had another surprise for us. Earwigs appeared on the scene in as great numbers as the wasps had been. The earwigs were apparently seeking winter quarters in which to hibernate. They crawled into the seams of our clothes, interstices of our caps, occupied every crevice and cranny in the tents, stuck their forceps into you if, feeling uncomfortable in your kit, you unwarily pressed or pinched them, and altogether made themselves as great a nuisance as the wasps.

How these women did work at this period ! We had barely got two wards up and one half fitted when Colonel Sondermeyer appeared in the camp, accompanied by Colonel Milosavlovitch from Ostrovo, and asked Dr.

Bennett whether she could take in wounded at once. When questioned on the subject I most strongly opposed the idea. If wounded came in at this stage the work would not only be greatly hampered and delayed, but the camp would be badly put up, have a slovenly appearance, and really good work would be an impossibility. The C.M.O. resisted the pressure put on her, and we got two days' grace. Those two days are an interesting nightmare to look back upon. The first wounded commenced to arrive at the end of the period of grace. We had then two wards complete and a third up, but not fitted. This fitting of the wards was the nurses' part of the job. The tents pitched, and flooring in, we departed elsewhere. The nurses then put together the iron bedsteads, every part of which had to be scrubbed clean first, arranged them in the tents, took over the necessary bedding, etc., etc., from the matron, and fitted up the wards.

The first "wounded" wasn't a wounded after all! And he came in before the period of grace had expired. He was a Serb soldier, and they found him lying in the road which ran past the south end of the camp, very weary, half starved, and in the last stage of exhaustion. He was, I believe, on his way to the trenches. Anyhow he had got as near as he wanted to go for the moment. Some soft-hearted nurse or orderly took pity on him, brought him into the camp, took him into No. 1 Ward, installed him in No. 1 bed, and they had a patient! And finding himself snug and warm he clung tight to that bed for days to come, became a kind of pet and institution in the hospital, and is there still for aught I know to the contrary.

The first wounded men were admitted on the 16th

September (the unloading of those last eight waggons had taken place on the 13th), and the ambulances commenced to run up to the dressing stations. We were a Casualty Clearing Station in being.

The time had now come to grapple with the operation tent. It was a Sunday. All our big jobs appeared to come up on a Sunday! All day we were at work on it and the sterilising tent, the two being linked together by a passage-way which had to be fitted where no fittings existed. This gave a lot of trouble, and the job was not finished till after nightfall.

There had been trouble over the working parties. I had forgotten that it was Sunday. One has no necessity for remembering the days of the week at the Front. On Sundays in the Serbian Army the soldiers have a half holiday "to wash their shirts," as a Serbian officer put it when he first told me of the rule. Apparently they wash them or are supposed to wash them once a week. But clean shirts or dirty shirts, men had to be present to-day and were eventually procurable. But the soldier is the same in all armies, a great child, and they could not be expected to work with the best grace.

These tents were fitted up the following day, and the first operation was performed by Dr. Scott on the 19th. Within the next week over thirty operations were carried out in this tent. A fine piece of work! I loathed passing the place. I looked in one night and once only. Round the operating table stood five people, a nurse and four doctors, three of our own and the X-ray R.A.M.C. specialist, who had been invited to be present. Good God! what an "invitation" to receive! The light of a strong enthusiasm shone on the faces of the

five ; a light born of the knowledge that this was the work they had come so far to perform, the work in which they had made themselves proficient, and that here was a life to be saved by their skill. On the table lay an inanimate form. He was to lose a leg. A lump rose in my throat as my eyes fell upon him. " Poor devil ! " I muttered, and dropped the flap.

In addition to our own medical staff a Serbian Army Medical Officer, a Colonel Djeorgevitch, was attached to the hospital for duty. He was an extremely pleasant man, an able surgeon, and had his own ward allotted to him which he ran in his own way. He had been in charge of the military hospital at Belgrade when war broke out, and had received his training either in Berlin or Vienna. I heard, on occasions, that he entertained a certain amount of—well, almost contempt for some of our British medical ways, and that it was difficult to keep him in bandages. All I knew on the latter head was that the numerous large bales of bandages brought out with the equipment seemed to melt like snow. But then the wounded cases were pretty awful. Personally I enjoyed talks with him, and his outlook on general affairs very much. Then there was that courtly officer, Major Nessitch, who occupied the position of Serbian Commissariat Officer to the unit. He was a delightful man, walked about with pockets full of bonbons, which he at once produced to propitiate any woman member of the staff who approached him on some matter of materials he had been asked to order, but which, as was natural, took a long time to turn up. To watch Major Nessitch appeasing Miss Gordon with propitiatory bonbons when the irate sanitary engineer wished to express her mind plainly on some long overdue material,

was as good as a play; the more so that the courtly manners and ingratiating smile of the dapper major so often left the irate Scotswoman speechless! Major Nessitch forms an only too common illustration of what the Serbian nation are going through. He has lost ten out of eleven members of his family, alive at the beginning of the war, and the eleventh, a sister, he has not seen for two years, and is uncertain whether she is alive. We had many conversations together, and he greatly despaired of the future of Serbia. "We have lost two million of our small population," he said, "and in the fighting now going on we are losing some of the flower of our remaining men. And we can't afford to lose a man." I used to endeavour to console him by saying that the Allies would doubtless create a larger Serbia, bringing in all the Serbs who at the beginning of the war were included either in the Austrian Empire or Bulgaria.

In this connection I was astonished one day to see a Bulgarian wounded brought into hospital. I asked Nessitch about it. "I thought no quarter was being given by either Serb or Bulgar." "Oh, that man is not a true Bulgar. He comes from the strip of country running down to Sofia which formed part of old Serbia. The people there speak Serbian as well as Bulgarian, and are really Serbs." True enough some days after I saw this man, and others subsequently, fraternising with the Serbs in the camp. Special orders had been given apparently to the Serbian soldiers that quarter was always to be given to these men, *i.e.* they were to be taken prisoners—not killed on sight when chance offered. But we had a true Bulgarian, an officer, brought in wounded one day. They first took him into the officers' ward. But every Serbian officer who could started

getting out of bed. They refused to remain in the same tent with a Bulgarian. And it was not the Serbian officers only. A severely wounded French colonel who was in one of the beds, on learning that a Bulgarian was being brought into the ward, faint and weak as he was, got frightfully excited and tried to raise himself to get out of his bed ; said he would die rather than remain for an instant in the same tent as a Bulgarian. He was very bitter this French colonel, and he had an excuse. His fine regiment had been almost cut to pieces, losing over a score of officers and the remainder nearly all wounded. As he expressed it to me, they had had a hell of a time, and he had never expected to get out alive. The French had had a bit of a check fighting up to Florina, and his regiment had borne the brunt of it. The Bulgarians by all accounts had butchered all the wounded, so there was something to be said for the French colonel.

The Bulgarian officer gave a lot of trouble. He absolutely refused to take any food or drink from the Serbian ward orderlies, and even from the hands of the sisters and women orderlies ! He would only eat eggs, boiled in their shells, which he took off himself. He apparently thought the Serbians would poison him, though they were much more likely to have knifed him. And he extended his suspicions to the women of the unit ! The Serbians quite failed to see why he should be treated in the hospital at all. The Serbian soldiers openly spat when they first caught sight of the Bulgarian uniform as he was taken out of the ambulance, and some gravely suggested that he should be killed out of hand. They did not understand, or would not, that there were no enemies in a hospital—that enmity ceased on crossing

its portals. It is impossible not to sympathise with their point of view when one remembers all that Serbia is suffering at the hands of Bulgaria.

The two other officers attached for duty to the camp were both from the Corps of Engineers to assist in getting up the camp—a Captain, by name Radoyevitch and a subaltern, who was always called the Blue Lieutenant, from the colour of his uniform. They were very nice, and at times amusing, even if they did not always quite appreciate my views on tent-pitching or on long working hours.

We had no daily newspapers in camp, nor such luxury as wires telling us about the outside world, but the rumours kept us going all right. These were of the wildest. Florina, not a score of miles away, had fallen a week before the actual event. We should all be in Monastir within a fortnight, so why worry about putting up the camp properly? and so on. These rumours, in so far as they affected the work, were most annoying. Having acquired some knowledge about the transport part of the business, even when Monastir did fall I did not see where we were going to get transport from to move us, considering the French were hard put to it to get up supplies and ammunition as it was. The news that the big Ekshisu viaduct had been blown up by the Bulgarians, thus putting the railway hors de combat beyond Ekshisu station, did not help matters. These rumours were exasperating, and the sanguine credence which the Serbian officers and men attached to us gave to them even more so. And as the hospital is still on the same site as I pen these lines in February,* I had at least some justification for the position I took up, which

* It was still there in May, save for a small advanced party sent up to the Monastir Plain under Dr. Muncaster.

was to listen to them, since one could do naught else, but believe none and make the best job we could of the work in hand. The attitude of the Serbians was quite natural. Their whole aspirations were centred on the recapture of Monastir and setting foot once more in their country and that important town of it. But we had no such reason for believing wild rumour; and nowhere is it wilder than up at the Front.

The M. T. had arrived up here now and formed their base camp about a mile away, with an advance post the other side of Ostrovo. This is the lot who were next us at Mikra, and who have helped the unit so greatly. Discussing the position with the Colonel in Command, Colonel Bearne, he said that the advance by the Serbians was being made more rapidly than had been anticipated, and that the problem of getting up ammunition and supplies was becoming very difficult and going to be far harder. The absence of roads and the awful bridle-paths in the hills meant that even the Ford cars, which formed the carrying vehicle of the M. T. companies up here, had all they could do to negotiate them, even with a load only two-thirds of their carrying capacity. I was asked a question on this subject some months later by the Director-General of Transport and Supplies at the War Office, and was able to fully satisfy him, I think, by a description of the country, that the Ford van, even carrying only a two-thirds load, was doing all that could be expected of it and doing it cheaply. After the fall of Florina, Colonel Bearne told me that the general impression was that the French would be in Monastir in two days, and if the Serbs advanced a similar distance in the mountains, the transport difficulties would be immense. I will give some idea of these roads later.

I saw the distant Florina struggle from our rocky hill on the night of its fall. A heavy cannonade had been going on all day to the north out Kajmaktealan way and to the west. We had received warning to show no lights after nightfall, a practical impossibility for us with work to do, as we might expect enemy aeroplanes and bombing, and perhaps some shelling by big guns. We had got beyond bothering about that kind of thing by then. You can't live within sound of the guns by day and night for long, even if you are not actually receiving their messages, without soon getting either *blasé* or fatalistic. We knew very well we might be bombed at any moment, as the Bulgars are no respecters of the Red Cross, and had become accustomed to the idea. Outwardly at least the news to-day made very little impression.

It was somewhere about midnight, perhaps earlier—my watch had stopped—when I went up the hill to see as much as possible of the big thrust for Florina which I had been told by a friend was on for to-night.

The camp was sunk in slumber. Not a man moved in the Serb lines. It was a very dark night with no moon as yet, and climbing up the rocky hill without a light was a bit arduous. To west and north-west the horizon was flickering with light, and the thunder of the guns became louder as one neared the summit of the slope. Of course this fight was taking place at a greater distance (four to five miles further on as the crow flies) west and north-west than the Gornicevo one, but from my position there was plenty to hear and see. There was more fighting to the north, where an attack or diversion was apparently being made by the Serbians; also away to north-east. In fact, the whole left and

centre of the front appeared to be in activity, with the object, no doubt, of making a certainty of Florina, the recapture of which was of course important. But to north and north-east it was chiefly artillery at work. The firework display was in the north-west and west, where star shells and flares were lighting up the sky, and the incessant flickering of the guns showed up against the dark background. On their lower flanks the great mountains lay dark and mysterious, save for the twinkle of camp fires showing up in spots where assuredly men had never bivouacked before in such numbers. Never before can these mountains have looked down on such a scene as they now presented. Every rocky track and steep rocky bridle-path, every little mountain upland valley and glen is now packed day and night with an ever moving and struggling mass of troops and transport, now wearily halting for a brief rest in which to cook their food, now snatching a few brief hours for slumber, then toiling onward again over the vile tracks, beneath a sun which is of almost tropical heat in the daytime, whereas the nights are bitterly cold. Up and down struggle this mass of men and animals, and seeing it one wonders once again at modern warfare, which takes no account of topographical features, but turns out whole nations to hold a line stretching from one frontier to another, paying no heed to the nature of the surface lying between the two flanks of the line. Nowhere could a better illustration be found than is to be seen in the chaotic mass of hills on the frontiers of Macedonia and Serbia.

I suppose I had been up on the hill some twenty minutes or so when the guns suddenly ceased, and the rat-tat-tat of machine-guns opened out, accompanied

by bursts of rifle fire and bombing. Occasionally the sound came quite loud and distinct, then it almost died away as the wind, blowing from east-south-east, dropped or came stronger. This attack continued for some time to be suddenly replaced (or drowned) as the artillery opened and poured in a continuous fire. It is the machine-gun, bombing, and rifle fire that sends the thrills through one, and sets the nerves a-tingling. We had all got used to the big guns, either firing intermittently for hours together or suddenly breaking out in fitful outbursts like a fretful child. It was different with the machine-guns and rifles. We only heard them on the grand attacks, of which Gornicevo was the first, this the second, and the series of attacks on Kajmaktealan and Starkov Grob the finale, so far as the camp was concerned—and these all took place in September.

It is so easy to picture the deadly work that is taking place when that rat-tat-tat starts in these fights in a bare open country devoid of any real trenches. Now the firing dies away, a silence ensues, a silence that can almost be felt, so heavy is it with the presage of death. The horizon is lit up with flares and star shells. Suddenly with a crash the guns break out, the sound rumbling round and round the mountain tops. The small arms and bombs take up the tune again and the horizon and distant mountain crest are now a continuous flicker of light. In vain one strains one's eyes through the glasses in the effort to make out what is taking place over yonder. That the fighting is fierce there can be little doubt. Are they going clean through this time, as the Serbians confidently predict? They think, talk and dream of little else but getting back into Monastir again.

I stood musing in this fashion on that dark hillside as

the attack waxed and waned out Florina way. Again it suddenly ceased, the flickering went out, the guns continued to speak intermittently for a time, and then a great silence supervened. I waited, but the silence was scarcely broken in the west, but from the north-east, faint and far off, came unmistakably the sound of guns, and a feeble flickering about the mountain crests in that direction could be just descried. This would be the French and Italians, or were the British attacking? It would be long ere I knew what was taking place out there. I faced the west again. How was it over there? Had Florina fallen?

CHAPTER XI

THE CAMP SETTLING IN. STORMING OF KAJMAKTCALAN BY THE SERBIANS

WE heard the next afternoon that Florina had fallen last night after a fine assault by the French and Russians, and that the French expected to be in Monastir in a couple of days. The camp, including the Serbian part of it, was positive this time. The hospital would move to Monastir within a week—or two. And most of us really believed that this would happen. It seemed reasonable enough, I must allow. Only my job was transport. And where was that to come from? I could not see my way and was voted a croaker and pessimist. I also wanted to see Monastir though—very badly.

Meanwhile we went on with the tent-pitching. The X-ray tents had to be got up and fitted for that important part of the hospital work. This involved putting together an engine and various other complicated details. Owing to unforeseen accidents our X-ray personnel had fallen through. One good turn deserves another, however, and the Colonel of the R.A.M.C. hospital, to whom Dr. Bennett had lent some nurses in Mikra Bay days, at her solicitation, sent up his X-ray specialist officer, Captain Riddell, with an assistant R.A.M.C. private. They started work on a Sunday. We had pitched the

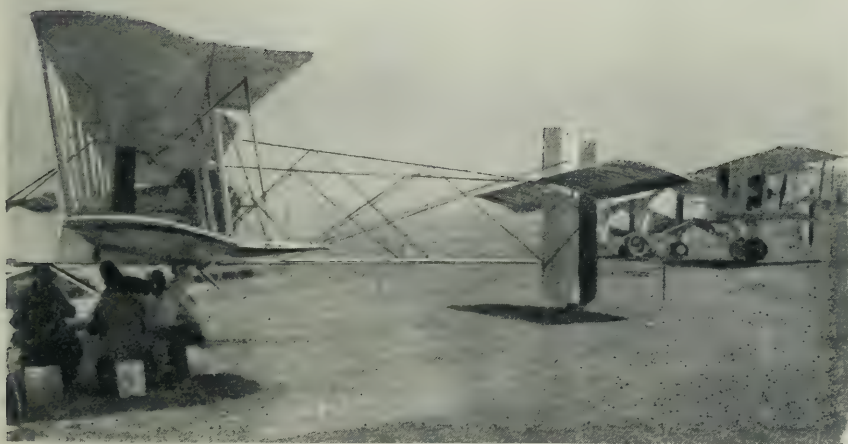
two tents of brown canvas, each having an inside black lining; one for the X-ray apparatus and stretcher for the wounded man, the other in which to develop the photographs. Their job was to set up the engine and the apparatus, and this work was completed and the first plate taken within three days. By the following Sunday eighty X-ray photographs, all of bad wounds, had been taken and developed—a magnificent piece of work. The photographs were beautiful examples of the work, and too high praise cannot be accorded to the men who produced them. For it must be remembered that the engine had to be placed on roughly levelled earth, as also the X-ray tent itself.

It was whilst engaged on this work that the Bosches gave us a fine aeroplane exhibition. We suddenly heard the sharp reports of guns to the north of us. It was Archibald. Looking up overhead we saw an aeroplane high up, flying very fast and shrapnel bursting below it. The sky was cloudless, but there was a breeze blowing, and the white cotton-wool-like balls of smoke were soon blown out into long tails and wisps. The plane was too high to be reached this time, though, and soon disappeared.

We saw a lot of this practice from the camp and they bagged one once, though luckily for us it did not fall within the camp. It would have made a nice mess of us if it had. The Scottish Women became so accustomed to these visits that after a time no one would bother to turn out to watch the firing. The prettiest exhibition was on an absolutely still evening just before sunset. We heard the guns to the south of us above the French aviation camp. In the sky we saw some roundish objects like balls of cotton wool, one or two with tails looking like descending parachutes. Suddenly we saw



FRENCH TRANSPORT GOING UP KAJMAKTCALAN: LAKE OSTROVO IS SEEN AT
THE BACK ENCIRCLED BY MOUNTAINS



THE FRENCH AVIATION GROUND.—A QUIET AFTER-DÉJEUNER GAME OF
CARDS 'NEATH A PLANE WING



two blackish specks now and then gleaming red under the rays of the westering sun. One was higher than the other—an enemy aeroplane pursued by a French one. The higher and faster one, turning west, flew into a black cloud after a time and disappeared, and the French one then returned. The Archibalds fired shot after shot at the enemy aeroplane, and it was a curious sight to see the round balls of shrapnel smoke hanging suspended in the air absolutely motionless for quite a long time before gradually opening out and dispersing. We counted some thirty of them in the air together, marking the course of the plane, and only very gradually they opened out, assuming the form of trees, oaks and elms, before finally dissolving.

Captain Riddell also had the electric light fitted up in the operating theatre, an inestimable boon to the surgeons. In those first few weeks work proceeded in that tent from 9 a.m. in the morning till 11 p.m. at night, and the rest of the hours till next morning were given to sterilising work. When the nurses and orderlies of that theatre slept during these heavy days of stress was an enigma to me. But there were scant hours of leisure—none, in fact—for any of the Scottish Women. The doctors, Drs. Bennett (the C.M.O.), Cooper (who had joined the unit recently from Australia), Lewis, Scott and Muncaster, spent hours in the operating theatre and the rest of the time in their wards. The C.M.O. had also the whole of the administrative work of the hospital to attend to in addition to receiving visitors, but of the latter more anon.

It may be mentioned here, however, that General Wassitch was one of our earliest, constant and most welcome visitors. He commanded the 3rd Serbian

Army, to which we were attached, and was most popular with all.

The matron and the nurses on night and day shifts, from the day they started the work of fitting up their Department, had no time free from the wards. Ten days after the arrival of those last eight waggons at the camp, one hundred and sixty beds were occupied, and a day or two later the hospital was full—nearly all wounded cases. Had we had five hundred beds they could have been filled with equal ease. They were badly needed at that time. If a quarter only of one of the big R.A.M.C. hospitals had come up from below and lain alongside us we should not have complained—not, that is, once we were installed ourselves, with no chance of being sent back.

The reception tent was under the charge of Sister Harvey, who had been a matron for a number of years, and yet had cheerfully come out with the unit in a subordinate capacity (that is the spirit we all love); she had an orderly assistant, Miss Reid, one of the most indefatigable people I have met, who had learnt Serbian, and was in danger of thinking the Serbians, who all loved her, the finest people on God's earth—and I do not blame her. Miss Reid had been one of the checking party and her work was above praise—my praise anyway. The hours of the reception tent were unlimited: wounded arrived at any hour, and the staff of that tent had to be ready to deal with them. That speaks for itself. And the rest of the orderlies, those in the wards, in the mess tents, in the kitchens and elsewhere—long hours of hard work and no distraction spelt their life.

Can you picture the life these women were leading at this juncture? I freely admit I could not have myself had I not seen it. Then there were the other departments.

That of the administrator, Miss Jack, who was responsible for the stores and the feeding of the unit, a not unimportant part of the business, let me tell you ; ask any fighting man, if you want corroboration, French, Russian, Italian, British or Heathen Chinese ; they'll all give you the same answer—food is the chief subject of their thoughts on active service. Miss Jack had the whole of the stores under her command, and held secret interviews with her colleague in this department, the Serbian officer, Major Nessitch, whom I have already mentioned as attached to us—a most courteous gentleman. Her orderly assistant, Miss Fowler, hailed from Aberdeen. A delightful person, who acted as bugler to the unit. It would be base flattery to say that her proficiency with this difficult instrument of music would have passed the Band Sergeant-Major ; but it was music, since the at times extraordinary, notes emitted meant the feeding hour, and the unit was always ready for its meals. That mountain air, you know !

Then there was the department of the sanitary engineer, Miss Gordon. That appalling machine the disinfector, whose peregrinations on the railway at home had entailed such a lot of worry, was part, one of the numerous parts, of her show. Yes, it fetched up all right—a monster of ugliness, a cross between a railway engine and a road tractor, with none of the beauties of either. The trouble that thing had cost ! It had been heartily cursed scores of times in at least five languages, as individuals of these five nations had in turn to deal with its cumbersome bulk. And I found out what it was intended for—to disinfect the wounded men's kit. I had had vague ideas that it was for disinfecting the hospital or the staff—didn't quite know which. However,

at length its owner's turn came to tackle it. And she had a lively time of it. She rescued it daily, almost hourly at first, from the Serbs' (who were training on as engineer assistants) unintentional but unremitting efforts to blow it up. Their idea was to pack it as tight as it would hold with the bundles of clothes, clamp-to the door, turn on full steam ahead, close all stop-cocks, valves, and so on, and then stand ecstatically watching the hissing monster. It was the show of the camp—invariably had a rapturous crowd round it; recovering wounded, when they could escape the vigilant eyes of the orderly, crawled to it: and why the lot were not blown to kingdom come no one seemed to know, not even their daily rescuer, the sanitary engineer. Miss Gordon had, however, as can well be imagined, a good deal of work to do besides admiring that hideous machine (it quite spoilt the appearance of that corner of the camp) or rescuing its devotees from sudden death. We may have been said to have divided the carpenter's shop, or the work in it, between us. Wood was at a premium with us, just as it is in this country at the present moment. The difference out there was that we openly begged or borrowed (both difficult) or surreptitiously stole it (easier when you know how) when possible. With the arrival of the first wounded, splints were required of all sizes and shapes. Each doctor wanted them. Nurses came from the wards to beg for them. They also wanted trays for the wards, tables, shelves, dustpans, foot-scrapers, sign-boards, name-boards, *et hoc genus omne*.

We had three Serb carpenters, two really good men. But each morning one would find them at the piece of work which took precedence of all others—making crosses to place on the graves of those who had died either on



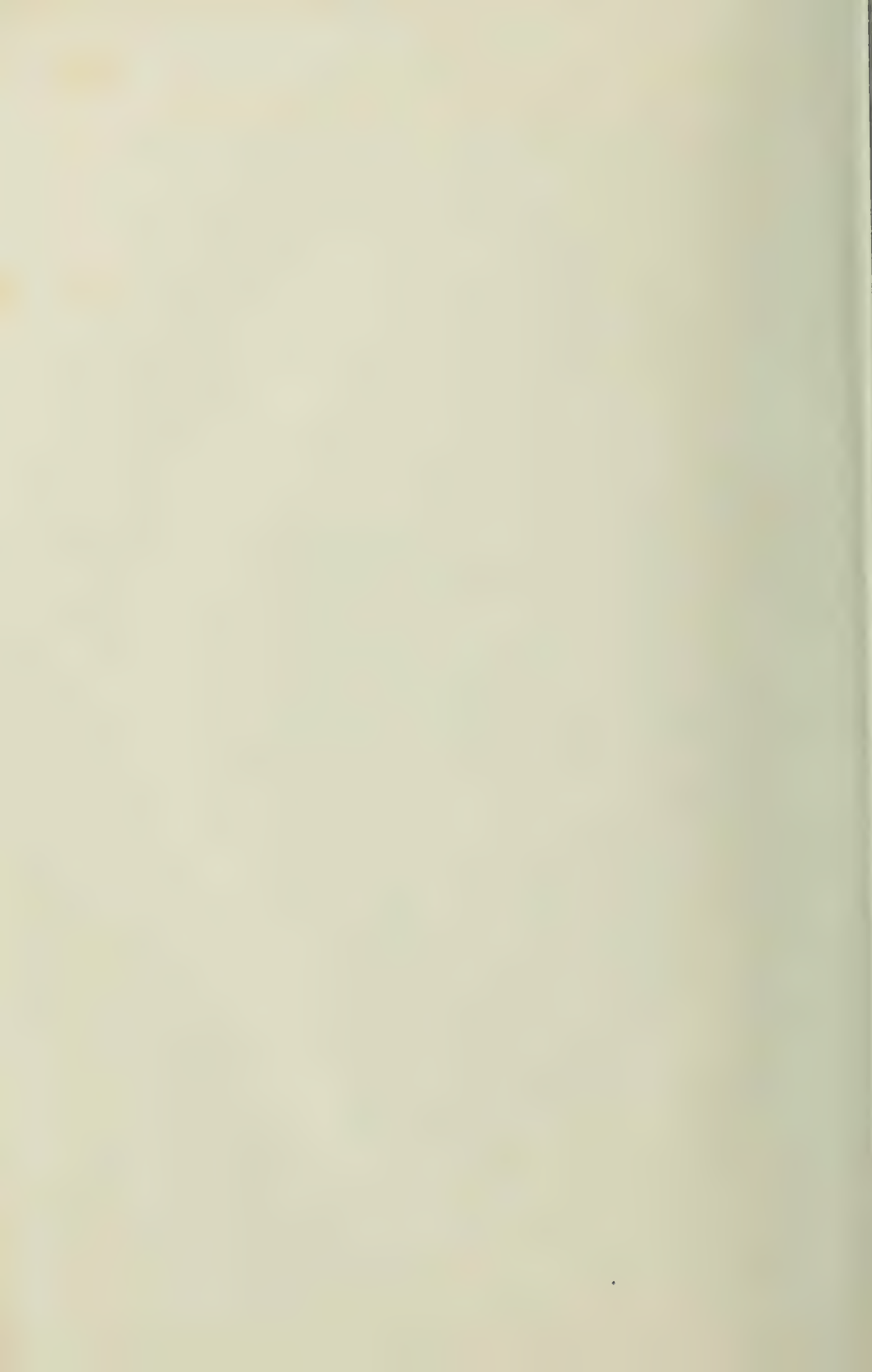
THE BUNDLES OF KIT BELONGING TO THE WOMEN



CARRYING THE SERBIAN DEAD TO THE LITTLE CEMETERY—A DAILY SIGHT IN THE CAMP AT FEIST



THE CARPENTER'S SHOP



their way down to the hospital or in the wards. At first these cases were three or four and even more a day. For instance, on the day on which wounded were admitted the first two of our ambulances brought in the one two dead men and the other one dead (all died on the road down); the fourth was alive, but he died a few hours after. This luckily was exceptional. But it must be remembered, as I have already said, that the fighting between Serb and Bulgar was no child's play. It was a sad sight to see these dead being carried away to the little cemetery specially prepared in the vicinity of the camp.

The only time I came near to having a serious difference with a member of the unit was over this matter of wood, and that member was the sanitary engineer; and what do you think it was over? The wretched remains of an open wooden crate from which the motor bicycle had that morning been unpacked. I had noted it at the time; the narrow wood lengths would do beautifully for splints and tables and trays, I had thought—numbers were required and our wood resources had run dry. It was a sweltering afternoon when I proceeded to carry out my intention of making use of that crate. Arriving at the scene of operations I found a Serb busily breaking up my crate under the direction of Miss Gordon. She also apparently had marked down the remains. I was soon reduced to silence by the S.E.'s rapid flow of eloquence, and in the end was only too willing to divide the remains, each piece being measured with the greatest care. I assure you it did not appear a small affair in our eyes, driven to the verge of desperation by the obvious wants of the wards and our inability to supply them. We remained, I am happy to say, good friends after the incident.

Another department, not the least important if mentioned last, was the washing department. I mean the laundry, under Mrs. Bishop, for which that blessed washing machine or mangle was required. This department commenced its career near the spring, one gnarled tree giving them all the shade and shelter they got for a week or two. Into that department's mysterious operations during that period I did not intrude. Then by good fortune a small house, about half a mile from the camp (the only house nearer than Ostrovo) was secured on the edge of the lake. Here after various vicissitudes the laundry got rigged up in full working order, but the task was one for Hercules—for the whole of the washing for the wards had to be undertaken there, in addition to that of the unit. Too high praise cannot be given to the organizing power displayed and the fine work done by Mrs. Bishop. I remain in a fog as to the meaning of the laundry notice put up on the order board—"Members of unit allowed three pieces of washing a week." This beat me! Was a pair of socks or pyjamas one or two? Was a collar or a handkerchief one? I couldn't solve these conundrums and never did, as the chief of that department came to my help, but without solving the mystery for me. What a lot of things men are hopelessly ignorant about! I'm willing to bet even money (or give a shade of odds) that few men, if any, can tell me how many pieces of washing make three; or put conversely, what three pieces of washing mean—in number of articles!

Riddell told an amusing yarn one night at mess. After passing his medical exams. he went as assistant to a doctor in a mining district. The latter had grown up in the district and was known to all by his Christian name

of Dan, Riddell being always styled the "helper." One day visiting a cottage he heard a youngster coughing and said to the mother, "That sounds like whooping cough. She will have it three weeks." One Saturday afternoon some time later he was in the inner room of the dispensary, working hours being over. He heard a man enter the dispensary and growl out, "Where's the helper?" The dispenser replied, "He's out." Riddell was just going to shout out, "No, I'm not," but knowing that the dispenser was to be trusted held his tongue. "When'll he be back?" "I don't know." "Well, I'll wait." "But I don't think he'll be in till late to-night, as he has a long round to do," said the dispenser, who, as he explained subsequently, did not like the truculent look of the visitor. "Won't Dan do? He'll be in soon." "No. Dan won't do. I want the helper. Look 'ere, see the wain 'ere." "Yes." "Well, the helper said she'd get quit of this cough in three weeks. It's three weeks to-day and she's still got it, and I wants to see 'im about it!"

We saw a great number of the troops going up to reinforce the French at this period. Russians, French cavalry, infantry and French colonial regiments, their transport and heavy guns. They passed day and night along the apology of a road which ran at the southern edge of our camp. They all halted for a ten minutes' rest here before completing the day or night's march to Ostrovo, and all evinced the liveliest curiosity in the camp. The officers would ride up and ask questions and inspect, exhibiting the greatest interest in the arrangements, whilst the men, as many as could get near, showed a preference for the neighbourhood of our cooking quarters.

A magnificent Russian infantry regiment appeared one morning and made the usual halt. They were a fine body of men of unusual physique, many with long fair beards cut square and blue eyes, others smooth round-faced youngsters. Some of the younger officers laughingly hoped that they would "get a bullet," and be sent down here. I think this was one of the finest regiments I saw in Macedonia. Their regimental transport which passed later was also very good. Another day we had a French cavalry regiment along. We were at dinner when suddenly the beautiful cavalry trumpets burst on our ears, and the Frenchmen, to a large and delighted audience, played the regiment past the camp, continuing the music until it faded in the distance. This regiment was a very serviceable one, the horses somewhat small but hard and fit. It did not quite come up to the one I had seen cross the Vardar bridge on my way back to Salonika. Artillery of all calibre was a never-failing source of interest to some, and the batteries of 115-cm. shown in the photograph were a fine sight. I subsequently saw them in action in front of Kenali. Regiments of curious interest to one acquainted with our native army in India and its composition, were the French colonial regiments, consisting of Frenchmen mixed with Senegalese, men from Madagascar, and so on.

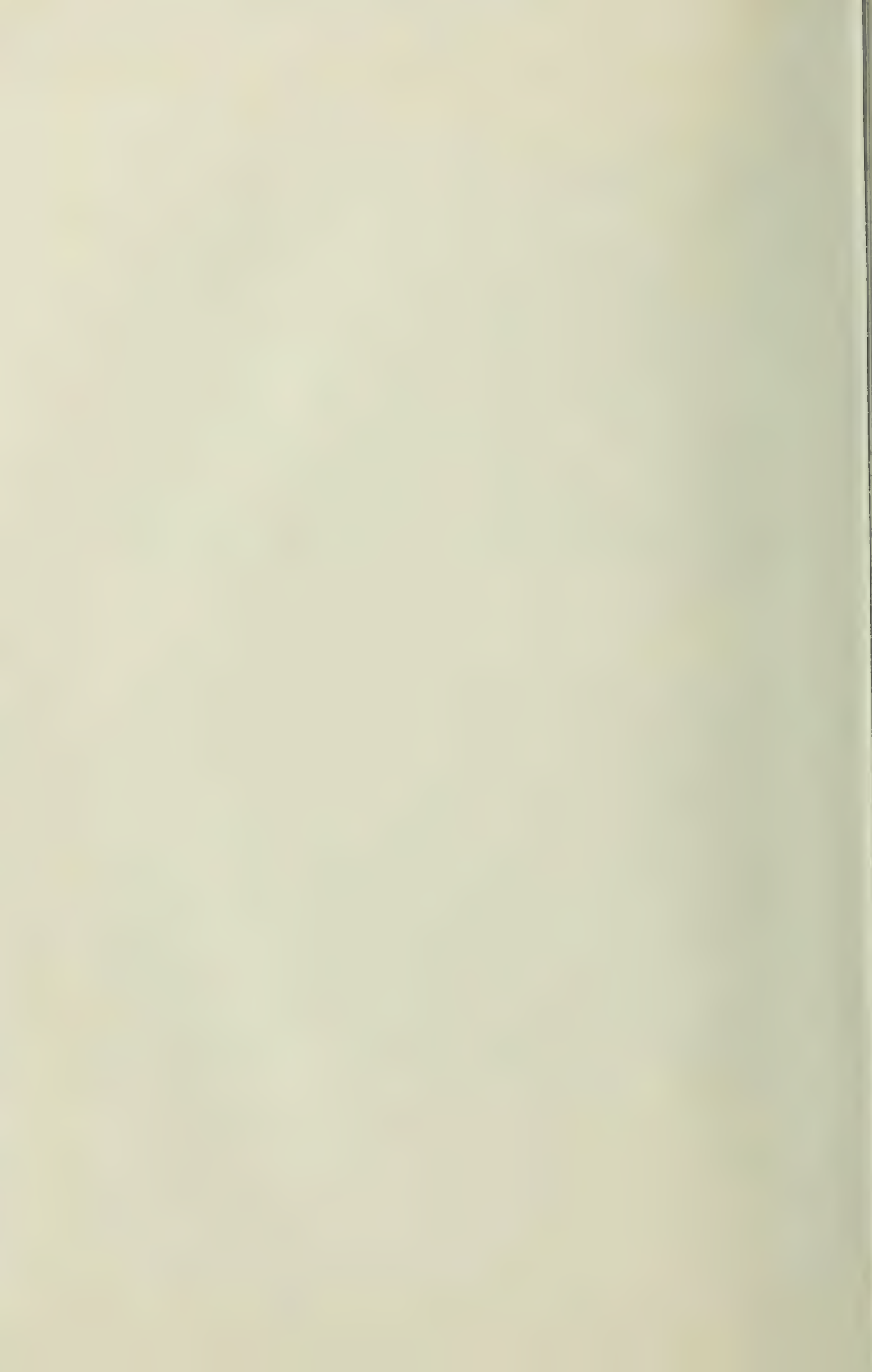
They are fine fighting regiments these French colonials, and the two we saw pass us were destined to sustain very heavy casualties in the assaults of the strong Kenali line in the Monastir plain. The Senegalese preferred carrying the whole of their kit, a pack of large dimensions, crowned with their trench helmet, on their heads—a remarkable sight to see men marching in the ranks in this fashion. Many were enormously muscular



RUSSIAN INFANTRY REGIMENTAL TRANSPORT. THE SOLDIER NEAR THE
CENTRE OF THE PICTURE IS NEARLY 7 FEET IN HEIGHT



A RUSSIAN INFANTRY REGIMENT EN ROUTE TO THE MONASTIR PLAIN.
A TEN MINUTES HALT, SEP. 1916



men. I talked with one French poilu who had fallen out, dead beat. He was war weary and very pessimistic on the subject of the war here. Said they had come straight from the trenches in France ; had reached Salonika three weeks ago, rested for a fortnight, and then marched up here. Poor devil ! he was done up.

Convoys of all kinds passed eternally throughout night and day, horse, lorry, pack pony, mule and donkey. We saw them all and heard them all, as also everlasting convoys of Ford cars going up and down on their business of supplying the French and Serbian armies with ammunition and food. At night to see a long line of these Ford cars appearing out of the barren stony hills to the east, their twin lamps brightening and dimming at intervals, was an eerie sight ; and the jarring noise of their engines as brakes were put on and off, after one had listened to it half the night, became not a little annoying. We had a mud hole, a bad one, on this road quite close to the kitchen. It was none of our doing. It was not there when we arrived. The heavy French lorries and transport carts, plus guns and ammunition caissons, all had had a hand in making it, and it very soon earned a reputation for itself far up and down the road. Men began to look out for it miles before they were near it. And then when they arrived and inspected it (for the first time) they scoffed. French, Russian, Serb and British, I have seen them all do it—and one after the other they all paid the penalty. I admit it did not look much. Two revolutions of the wheels would do it. The one revolution was made all right, but the second might take hours or a day. In two cases French lorries spent two days apiece in that slough of despond. And the conversation that

went on round the place during the twenty-four hours ! Of course most of it is unprintable. But for any one keen on languages, for instance an etymologist or dictionary-compiler, well, a first-class fare to this spot and a fortnight's bivouacking there would have given him sufficient work for the rest of a good long life, and he could have read papers at scientific literary gatherings for the rest of his days. I learnt quite a lot at the hole. They were rushing up a French infantry regiment in lorries to the Front one day, owing to some small check experienced by the French. The railway was blocked owing to a bad accident to a hospital train at Vertekop. Lorry after lorry went into the hole. Some got out fairly easily. Others took most of the regiment to drag them out. I brushed up a lot of my French—I mean French of a certain kind—at the mud hole that afternoon.

About the middle of September the real attack on the Kajmakcalan and Starkov Grob positions began. The fortified crest of the former mountain, with the equally strong Starkov Grob one to the west, formed the key to the whole position. Once taken it meant that the Serbs could descend on the other side in the direction of the Monastir plain, though there would be plenty of hard fighting to undertake on the Cherna before they reached that point. It was on September 18th that I saw the real commencement of the attack on Kajmakcalan. Something took me into Ostrovo on a brilliant morning. We had beautiful autumn weather for the most part during the next month. The slopes of the great mountain lay bathed in sunlight with fleecy cloud masses here and there, in part composed of smoke from the batteries. These were hard at work. The bursting shrapnel from the Bulgarian guns could be distinctly seen, as also our

batteries firing up over the ridge searching for the Bulgar batteries on the far side, hidden in almost impenetrable ravines ; their guns hauled up to this great height at the expense of almost superhuman labour. To get our own batteries into their present position, as I subsequently saw for myself, was a task which no one would have dreamt of attempting before this war. The bombardment on this morning was very severe, much more so than it had been for many a week past, on and off. Away to the west the cannonade was also very heavy. This was to culminate in the assault on Florina which fell on this night. The Kajmaktcalan mountain mass rises sheer up due north of Ostrovo at a distance of about a couple of miles. It looks an impossible place to get troops and guns up into.

The battle of Kajmaktcalan is usually given as having been fought and won on September 18th. But this is not the date upon which the final summit was won. I describe this battlefield in a later chapter from notes made at the time of visiting it. The taking of the three successive lines of trenches on the slopes and crest of Kajmaktcalan and the Starkov Grob position to the south-west took the best part of ten days or more. Being encamped so close and within sound and view of the mountain, I daily recorded the various phases of the battle as the news came in to us by telephone. Also many of the seriously wounded from the battlefield came direct to us, brought down from the field dressing station on the Drina immediately below the fighting line. I had the good fortune to become great friends with a colonel of one of the infantry regiments, Colonel Stojchitch, who was badly wounded in the arm in one of the fierce fights up on the great mountain side. The

actual crest was taken on September 30th. Truly was it a fight fit for gods up there, far above tree level on the stony and rocky slopes in the bitter cold of late autumn, and all honour to the men who fought it. It was the Army to which we belonged that was fighting up there, and we followed the fortunes of the great contest, as they waxed and waned, with close attention and anxiety; for until the Bulgarians were turned out of there, the fortunes of our hospital were still in the balance. Retreat would be impossible for us and none were keen on becoming prisoners to the Bulgars.

The following daily record as jotted down in my diary is of interest :—

September 19th.—Artillery fire broke out heavily during the night.

September 20th.—A severe action was fought to-night up on Kajmakcalan, preceded by heavy gun fire, with the first machine-gun, bombing, and rifle fire heard up there.

I was told that the Serbians were attacking the first of the three lines of trenches protected by wire entanglements. For three hours the turmoil continued. The Serbians were enfiladed by machine-gun fire and lost heavily. My little bell tent faces north over Kajmakcalan, and I lay on my cot looking across to where the great mountain mass cut the dark vault of the heavens, studded with brilliant stars. The slopes were flickering with the flashes of the guns and the star shells, whilst the crest gleamed dull red. One hoped to see it all a bit nearer one day. Some progress was made, we heard.

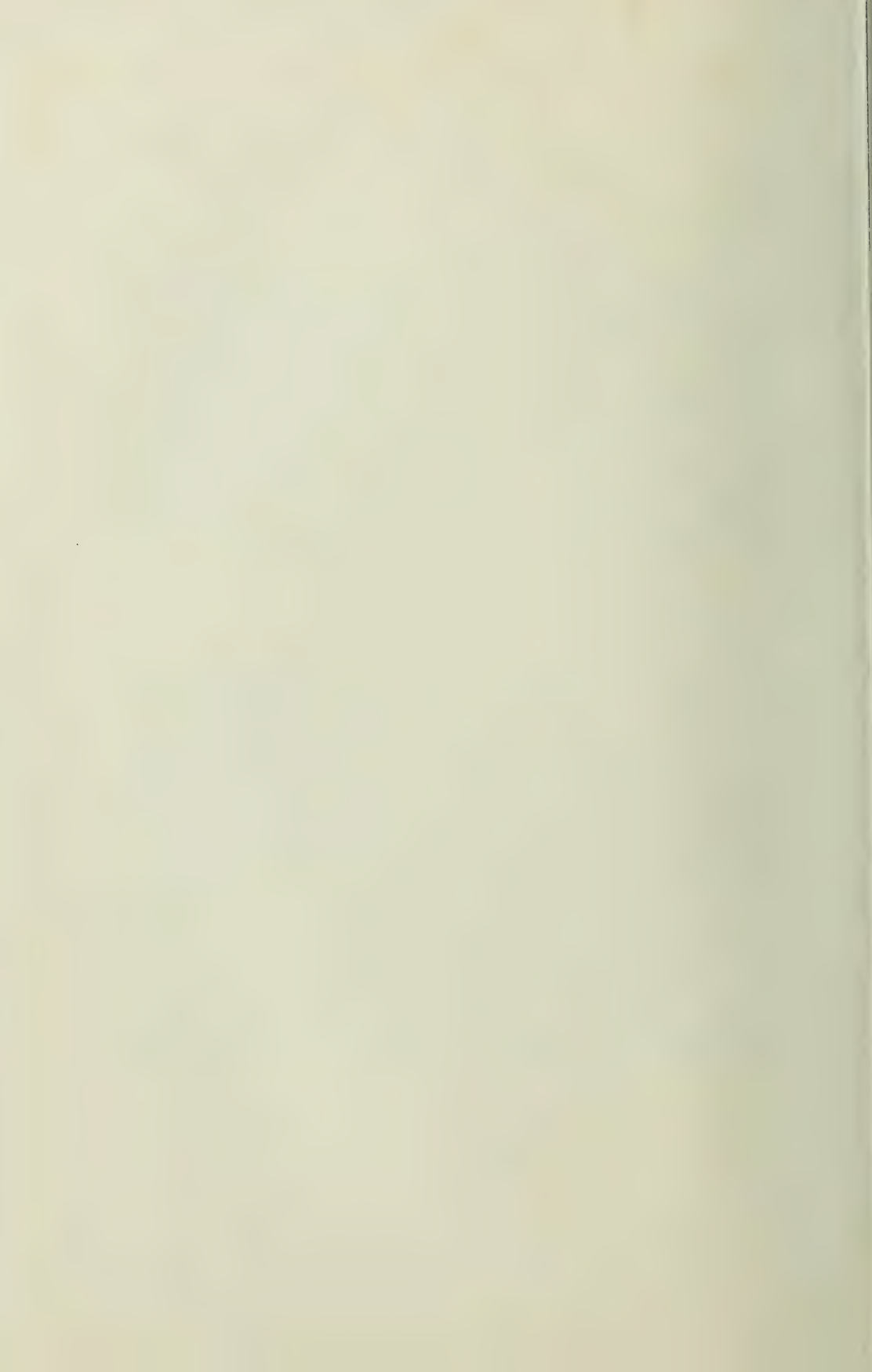
September 21st.—A stormy wet thundery day. Kajmakcalan is hidden in dense cloud masses. It must



SAKULEVO VILLAGE UNDER SHELL FIRE. THE COUNTRY AND MOUNTAINS BEYOND
ARE BLOTTED OUT BY THE SMOKE OF THE VIOLENT BOMBARDMENT OF THE
KENALI LINE BY THE FRENCH



H.R.H. THE CROWN PRINCE OF SERBIA ON KAJMAKTCALAN, END OF SEP. 1916



be bitter cold work for both sides carrying out modern war at that elevation under such conditions. A lull in the firing. It is quite strange to be without the sound of guns in our ears.

September 22nd.—The guns commenced firing again this afternoon, the visibility having improved. The check, owing to the mist, has been rough on the Serbians, as it has enabled the Bulgarians to strengthen their positions.

September 23rd.—Guns have been at work all to-day, and to-night a fierce engagement, the hottest we have had for several nights, is taking place up on Kajmaktcalan.

Sunday, September 24th.—Heavy fighting took place on the mountain this afternoon. The progress is slower than was anticipated.

September 25th.—The day was quiet with intermittent artillery fire. The attack opened fiercely to-night to N.E., N., and N.W., with the usual accompaniment of star shells, flares and machine-gun, bombs, and rifle fire. It lasted for several hours and a fiercely contested battle was evidently taking place.

September 26th.—The attack of last night continued into the early hours of this morning and was especially fierce in the direction of Starkov Grob. Throughout the day there were occasional outbursts of artillery fire which increased after nightfall with fierce bursts of small arms fire.

September 27th.—The heavy firing on night of 25th–26th September was the fiercest engagement which has yet taken place. It was hand-to-hand, the Bulgarians counter-attacking the Serbians to recover lost trenches on the heights. The enemy came on four times and got into the Serbian trenches, only to be thrown out. It is

rumoured, however, that the Serbians lost portions of trenches they had previously taken. The latter had 500 killed and 1000 wounded, and they say that the Bulgarian losses were far heavier, which is probable, as they were the attackers, and the ground up there is almost devoid of cover. Wounded from this fight were brought down to the hospital to-day, amongst these the Serbian colonel, Colonel Stojchitch, previously alluded to. He told me that the fighting had been of the fiercest with the bayonet and no quarter given. To make matters worse, the ammunition ran short, probably owing to the block on the railway.

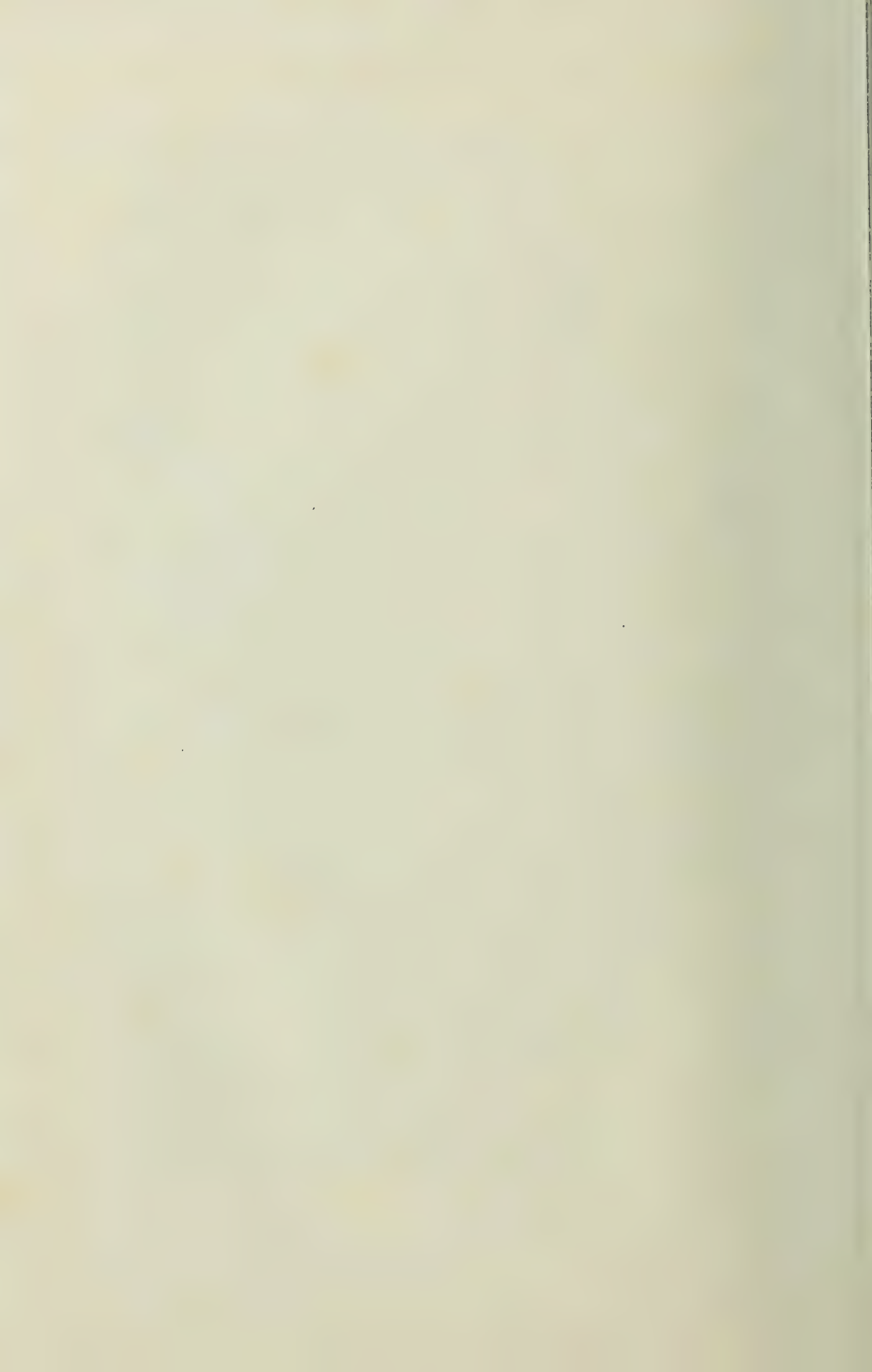
I rode out to a hill a couple of miles away in the late afternoon, from which a fine view of the whole upper part of Kajmaktealan is obtained. The Serbian batteries were firing salvoes on to the crest, whilst the bursting shells of the Bulgarian batteries dotted the slopes below, searching the Serbian lines. The night was comparatively quiet, but star shells and flares were constantly sent up, each side doubtless expecting an attack.

Heard this evening that orders had been issued to give the Serbs a couple of days' rest before the final assault is made. The Serbian colonel told me that they are now up to the upper line of trenches very near the crest. He said that the fighting was of the deadliest. His regiment, 2500 strong, had suffered severely in these advances, numbering now only 950; that he had had 30 officers killed and as many wounded, including himself, he being in a forward trench at the time. I saw the place later.

September 28th.—Practically no firing to-day. The Serbs are resting and their batteries waiting for more ammunition. Heard to-day that General Wassitch



COLONEL STOJCHITCH IN UPPER LINE OF TRENCHES, IN WHICH HE WAS WOUNDED, ON KAJMAKTCALAN.
THE ROCKY BARREN NATURE OF THE MOUNTAIN IS WELL DEPICTED



has determined on a big push in two days' time to clear the Bulgars off the crest of Kajmaktcalan, and finally pierce this stronghold.

September 29th.—I went up to the Drina dressing station some five miles or so below the firing line. The guns were quiet up here, and the mountains, putting on their autumn tints, were glorious. The road up the Drina is described later.

I had heard from Captain Gooden, liaison officer, that the grand attack was to commence to-night and remained in Ostrovo to watch it. Already the shades of night had fallen on the lower parts of the mountain, but the summit was bathed in soft yellow light from the rapidly setting sun. Soon this turned to blood red, a fitting pall for the night of carnage which was so soon to take place up there on the heights. The night bid fair to remain clear and starlight. As often as not during the past fortnight the upper part of the great mountain has been enshrouded in mist. From our position we could only see the flashes of the guns and the reflected light of the star shells, flares, bombs, etc., for a swelling in the upper part of a spur below the crest hid the actual scene of the fight and deadened to some extent the noise of the rifle and machine-gun fire. The bursting of the Bulgar shells was distinctly visible, ceaselessly searching for our batteries. We sat and watched the great fight for some hours. Now and then the telephone spoke, but there was nothing definite yet. The fight continued throughout the night, but the sound decreased in the morning, possibly due, we thought, to the fact that the wind was blowing from the south up on to the crest. No news had come in to say that definite success had been attained, no news that was given out at any rate.

Through the day the guns waxed and waned, and in the camp, to which I had to return, as one went about the work one feverishly wondered how things were going up there. In the evening just before supper anxiety was set at rest. A telephone message came through, saying that the Serbs had captured the crest and that the Bulgarians were in full retreat down the steep northern slopes of Kajmaktealan. We were all, Serbians and British alike, very jubilant that night, and there was great festivity in the Serbian camp and our hearty congratulations were not wanting.

The Serbians had still much hard fighting in front of them ere Monastir was to fall, and that fall was to be directly attributable to their magnificent efforts and extraordinary pluck. But they never fought a better fight than when the 3rd Royal Serbian Army, to which we were so proud to belong, captured the crest of Kajmaktealan after an Homeric contest, and once again set foot on the beloved soil of their native land.

CHAPTER XII

THE WORK OF THE HOSPITAL

I FEEL that some description of the work of the hospital will be expected of me. I approach the subject with considerable diffidence, having small knowledge of medical matters. I confess also to an instinctive shrinking from hospital work. Dead men and badly wounded men; human nature can soon accustom itself to both without emotion. But when it comes to operations and to witnessing wounds being dressed I am no good. Consequently any deficiencies, and they must prove glaring to medical men, in the following account must be condoned, since I never willingly saw more of that part than I could help.

I will endeavour to describe the hospital after we had got organised, trusting that the description will convey to the reader the task the Scottish Women were engaged upon. The hours of meals upon which the organisation of all units must depend, I have mentioned. It became necessary to have relays of them to fit the various work of the departments, chiefly the wards. The relays followed each other in quick succession, so as to get each individual meal over and the mess tent free as soon as possible. Miss Jack was strict in these matters, and properly so. Women, unlike men, when engaged in

interesting work, or under a pressure of work, will sooner go without a meal or several meals than knock off to take them. Now this, although fine in a way, does not make for efficiency, since sooner or later the individual acting on this principle must break down, and then the machinery, which depends upon her as much as on the rest, gets out of gear. The point would not be worth mentioning were it not that it appears more than likely that women will have a larger share in the future in employments ordinarily confined to men before the war. If this is to be the case, the woman will have to learn this lesson of the absolute necessity of regular meal hours. You will ask what has this to do with the hospital? Well, a good deal. We had our fair share of sickness, as I shall mention later. Under the existing conditions much of it could not be avoided, perhaps. It was a certainty. But from my own observations I am sure that in cases individuals let their keenness outrun their sense of proportion in this matter. The harder the work, the greater the privations, the greater the necessity for keeping the human frame up to the mark. Having had, perhaps, more than the average experience of roughing it, I offer these remarks to the women (and I can hear them snorting with indignation already). I believe them to be in their true interests if they wish to take a hand in the world's work of the future. Why this matter of sickness is mentioned at all is that it threw a great deal of additional work on the staff of certain sections of the hospital, and on none more than the wards. Of necessity they were the ones to suffer most, *i.e.* the doctors, sisters and orderlies. The hospital staff was calculated to a nicety for the work to be performed. Sickness tended to throw the machine out of



THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S HOSPITAL AT OSTROVO. THE HOSPITAL WARDS, WITH THE OPERATION THEATRE, IN SHADOW
IN LEFT HAND CORNER. THE HEAD OF LAKE OSTROVO IS SEEN AT THE BACK



gear, especially sickness which at one time amounted to 10 per cent. of the effectives. We were not the only unit in Macedonia to suffer in this way by any means, but we had not as large a staff as most, and in practice it meant an extra ward to attend to, threw more work on Dr. Lewis, the medical officer of the party, and involved detaching a nursing staff; and of course entailed anxiety on the already overworked C.M.O. To glance briefly at the hospital work.

Dr. Bennett would start her day's work after breakfast by inspecting the camp, probably once a week including the tents of the personnel (one felt rather as if one were visiting young relations in a girls' school on these occasions, there was such a scurrying amongst the orderlies and chauffeurs). Inspection over, an hour or two would be spent in the office, where an indefatigable assistant, Miss Morrison, passed many hours of daylight and other light over the correspondence. The C.M.O. would probably then proceed to the operating theatre and remain the rest of the morning there. Part of the afternoon would be spent in her ward, although with the pressure of work she had to give this up in a short time. Then office would claim her for most of the rest of the day, unless visitors required showing round. Rarely a day passed without conclaves with Serbian officers, Colonel Sondermeyer from Salonika, Colonel Milosavlitch from Ostrovo, a constant visitor of course, and so on. The C.M.O. passed busy days.

The wards were divided up between Colonel Djeorgievitch and Drs. Lewis, Cooper, Scott and Muncaster—four surgical wards, and one medical under Dr. Lewis. Dr. Muncaster had a half-ward, as she was the bacteriologist and had charge of the laboratory, and the C.M.O. subsequently

relinquished hers. As would be expected, the work in the wards went on all day and late into the night during that first month, when the wounded poured into the hospital. I scarcely saw the doctors during that strenuous time save at meals, or when anything was wanted either for the wards or the operating theatre. Supper over, they went back to their wards or the theatre, to both of which their devotion was untiring and unflagging, a devotion which secured my whole-hearted admiration. The wounded coming in of course required this constant care and supervision. As a rule, only the very bad cases were sent to the hospital. The others went down, as occasion and room offered, by rail to the hospitals in the plain. The Scottish Women had to deal with men terribly shattered and broken by the fighting, undertaken on the exposed and rocky mountain sides, and it was a marvel not that some died, but that the percentage was not far higher than was actually the case. The wards were arranged, as I have said, with four tents apiece, the tents of each half-ward being connected by a passage way. Thus you could enter a half-ward at one end, walk down the centre of the two tents of which it was composed, and issue at the far end. In each tent were ten beds, five a side, twenty beds in the half-ward. The canvas sides of the tents could be rolled up in the daytime so that the wounded were able to get fresh air and have something to look at. On fine days a bed or two with its occupant would be carried outside. So far as I could observe, the dressing of the wounds was carried out by the doctors at any and all hours of the day and late into the night. I went into Dr. Scott's ward on several occasions when I could do so with safety—I mean to my own peculiar susceptibilities. There was a Serbian

in it whom I greatly admired—a good-looking, open-faced man of some thirty-five years. As is customary, the doctors obtained the assent of the wounded man before performing an operation which meant losing a limb. Well, this man was told he must lose an arm, and point-blank refused. On being appealed to, every Serbian officer, medical and otherwise, tried to shake his determination, but he held to it. He would die if he must, but he would not have his arm taken off. One of the Serbian officers told me of it, and I thought “Poor devil!” and then forgot the incident. Two days later I asked Dr. Scott, who had been greatly distressed over the matter, since he was in her ward, whether the man was yet dead, and was amazed to hear that he was not, and was not going to die. She took me in to see him a day or two after. He was sitting up in bed smoking, and as merry as a cricket. Doctor Scott translated my congratulations to him, but he read them in my face; also my amusement that he should have “done” the doctors. All the poor fellows round who were in a condition to smile at all grinned appreciatively at their comrade. I saw him a good deal after that. As I say, I admired his pluck or obstinacy, call it which you will, and he always greeted me with a broad, delighted smile, thinking he had recognised in me a kindred spirit. I doubt, though, that I should have had the pluck.

As to the operations, I can tell you very little about them. During that first terrible rush the demands on the operating theatre were very heavy. I remember that Dr. Scott was the last to get her first lot of cases in, and she had then eighteen. I know just enough about the aims of the surgeon to be aware that the surgeons of the S.W.H. at Ostrovo had during that first month

opportunities for the practice of surgery which must be almost unique amongst the greater bulk of their *confrères*. Of this I was assured by R.A.M.C. officers, who had a first-hand chance of knowing the facts. More I cannot say. I witnessed the wounded pouring in, and I saw the operating theatre going from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. during these days. In a week something like thirty operations were performed. It was a chance in a lifetime, and they were fortunate to be there to take it. In connection with the operating theatre was the X-ray plant installed by Captain Riddell and his assistant. Riddell was with us a bare week, his assistant another week. Then we were rather stranded. A sister had tried to pick up some knowledge of the plant, and one day appealed to me when the engine broke down, but I was ignorant. The M.T. once again came to our help. Dr. Lewis was equally hard-worked at this period. Although we were a casualty clearing station chiefly for wounded, it was necessary to have a medical ward, which soon filled, and there was also the personnel ward. Dr. Lewis is that kind of medical officer whom the layman understands instinctively and trusts implicitly, and consequently gets well all the quicker. Whether this gift is acquired or born in the doctor I do not know. But when there it is invaluable. Drs. Lewis and Muncaster and a Serbian assistant were the chief ones I think to deliver the anæsthetic in the operation theatre, where they spent many hours. The latter being the bacteriologist also had charge of the laboratory, which was elaborately equipped and required much better housing than the small seven-foot tent which was all we could spare for it.

The next place of importance was the reception tent,



A PORTION OF ONE OF THE WARDS FILLED WITH WOUNDED SERBS



SERBIAN WOUNDED BROUGHT DOWN FROM THE DRESSING STATION ON KAJMAKTCALAN IN THE S.W.H. AMBULANCES. A WOUNDED MAN JUST TAKEN FROM AN AMBULANCE BEING CARRIED BY SERBIAN ORDERLIES INTO THE RECEPTION TENT. DR. SCOTT (IN WHITE) ASSISTING



in charge of Assistant Matron Harvey and her orderly, Miss Reid. This tent was pitched at the entrance to the camp. The ambulances came up in front as shown in the photograph. The Serbian ward orderlies took out the stretchers and carried them into the reception tent. Here the Assistant Matron and Miss Reid undressed and washed the men, put them into hospital kit, and despatched them to the indicated wards, of which they were furnished with a list of vacant beds. In the great period of stress after Gornicevo and Kajmaktcalan the ambulances came in at any hour of the day, and sometimes late into the night, and carts might be expected to arrive at any time. Two orderlies were working here at that time, the late Miss O. Smith helping. The work in the reception tent during this period was terrific, and how those women stood it I never understood, for they had no relief. It follows that the matron and the sisters in the wards had their hands very full at this time. The latter worked in two shifts night and day, special black linings having been provided for the tents in which the night nurses slept during the day, and their work during this period was incessant, and the time snatched for meals short and scrappy. This was inevitable, and with the nurses were included their ward orderlies. In addition to the Serbian staff of the wards there was one girl orderly to each half-ward, which was in charge of a nurse, with a more senior sister in charge of each ward under the doctor of the ward. The matron had charge of the ward's store tent, all ward requirements coming from her. As these latter made constant claims on our big dump, which had constantly to be opened out and repiled, I got to know something on the subject of a hospital consumption in the way of bandages,

wool, and so forth. The ward people's task was all the harder at first owing to the want of tables, chairs, shelves, trays, etc., which we lacked. Had we remained in Salonika these things would have been easily procurable, but we were sent up to the Front. Consequently till we could knock these up roughly in the carpenter's shop, all too small for our purpose, it meant extra work in fetching and carrying in the wards at a time of great pressure. We got them going in time, but neither the trays nor the dustpans were exactly of drawing-room or London hospital pattern.

Belonging to the wards was the dispensary—almost, I think, the neatest thing in the whole camp. Fitted up in a ten-foot tent, the shelves, etc., knocked up in packing cases, this little place was a marvel of organised efficiency, and would have done credit to a hospital of any size. This was the handiwork of Miss Wolseley, who presided in this department. Outside the matron's stores, Miss Jack, the administrator of the unit, had entire charge of stores and general administration of supplies. She also acted as censor and half a dozen other things. So far as my personal observation went, if we except the cooks, she was the first up in the morning and the last to make the rounds of her domain at night. She always looked as if she had just stepped out of a band-box—so did many of the others for that matter. Don't know how they managed it. Miss Jack was, I think, born for her particular part of hospital organisation. She was naturally equipped with all the desiderata, and added to these special qualities that strict sense of rigid probity we associate with the Scottish character. Even in a land where the Greek example of "pinching," as the army designate it, rather undermined characters of

less heroic mould, Miss Jack remained impervious and strong, and firmly shut her eyes to the lapses in this respect of the less rigidly moral amongst her companions. Ah, well, we cannot all be Miss Jacks—not in war-time in Macedonia at any rate. In her assistant, Miss Fowler, she found a most capable person, whose versatility I had already made acquaintance with in the checking party. The mess tent orderlies also worked under Miss Jack, and their task was, I think, one of the most thankless and least interesting of the lot.

The work of the sanitary engineer, Miss Gordon, I have already briefly described. Extraordinarily varied as it was, it could certainly not have been performed in the way she carried it out by any one not well versed in the duties and fully capable of discharging them. But her war life had already been diverse, as she had been taken prisoner in the Serbian show, and had had experiences which would have sufficed for a lifetime for most people. If she had here jobs which I did not envy her, they were (1) the disinfector, and (2) the incinerator. But sanitary medical science nowadays has been brought to a marvellous pitch.

I propose to deal with the work of the ambulances, which was of first-class importance to the hospital, since it chiefly depended upon them, in the next chapter. Miss Bedford, who had joined at Ostrovo with Dr. Cooper from Australia, was in charge of the cars, and a hard worker she proved. Owing to her great efforts to keep the cars on the road by begging or borrowing spare parts from all and sundry, she became known amongst the M.T. as far down as Salonika way as “Miss Spare Parts,” and I fancy she earned the cognomen all right. For a time she ran with Miss Reid the business

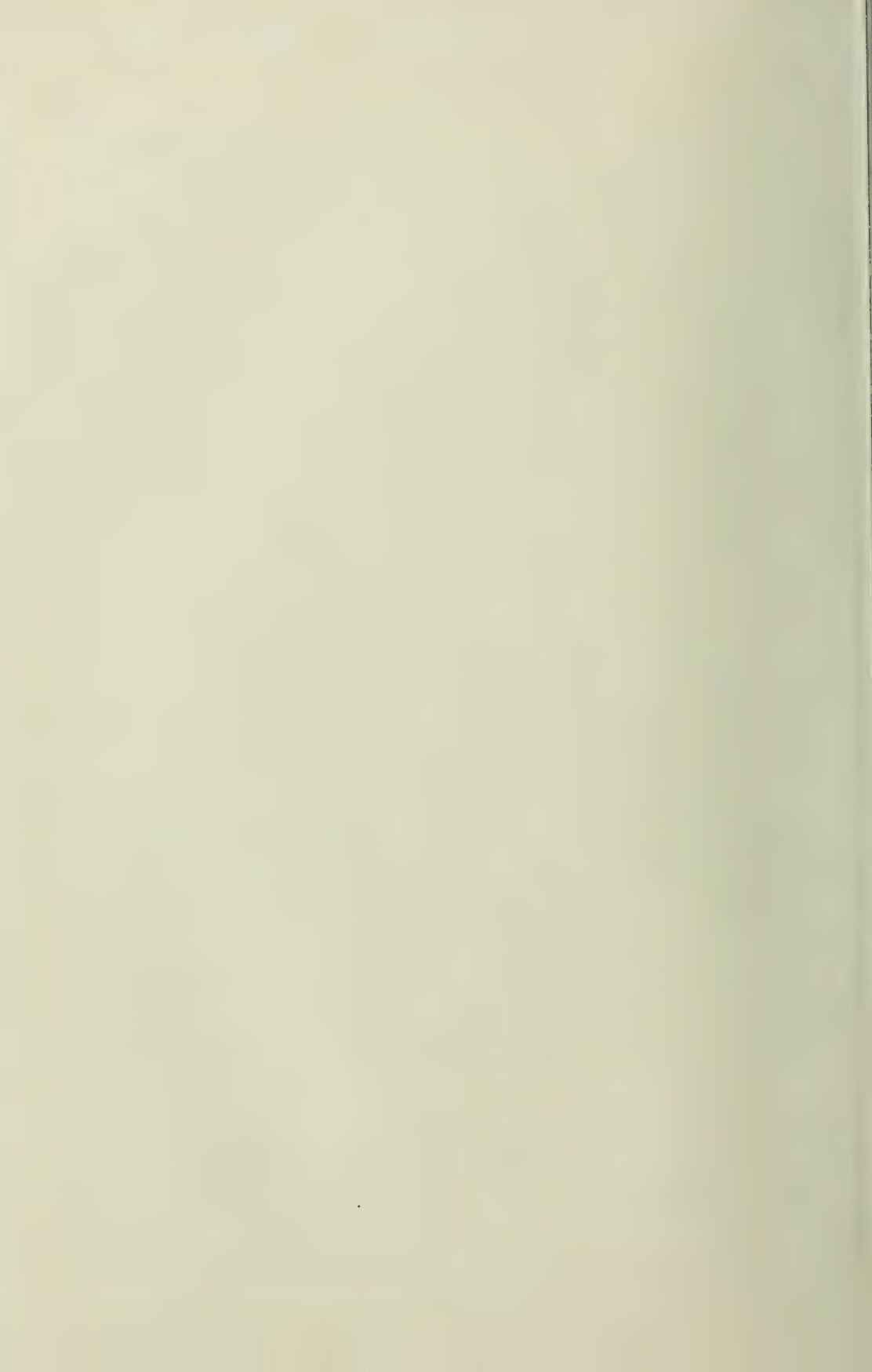
connected with the bundles of clothes of the wounded, but with the hospital nearly full, and evacuations of men who could be moved to the base hospitals started, this work was made over to the Serbian Staff attached to us, and much relief was felt at getting rid of it. The mere enumeration of a wounded man's kit plus accoutrements plus every article he had on him (loaded revolvers of many patterns, cartridges, flares, even bombs, would come to light and frighten the investigating women half out of their lives, very naturally) absorbed a lot of time. And finding bundles belonging to men to be evacuated a good deal more. It required the time of a special staff. Lastly, there were those two important parts of the hospital organisation, the cook-house under Miss Kerr and the laundry under Miss Bishop. I have already alluded to both these. The work of both, heavy enough from the outset, became infinitely harder with the opening of the wards. The cooking for the latter was then separated from that of the personnel, a separate cook-house being built at the other side of the camp, Miss Kerr, cook-in-chief, superintending the operations of both. I never rightly understood how they coped with this cooking business with only wood to burn. But Miss Kerr and her very capable assistants managed very effectively. The laundry, as I have mentioned elsewhere, found good quarters, and some old women were unearthed to assist, but it remained, I am told, a job of gigantic magnitude. I think the bald narrative of the work the hospital was called upon to undertake before it was in anything like a thoroughly organised condition will prove the extraordinary efficiency it so rapidly acquired. This efficiency was, I think, due to two causes. Firstly, the example of untiring and unflagging industry



GORNICEVO DRESSING STATION WITH SERBIAN MEDICAL OFFICERS. COLONEL MILESAVLOVITCH, IN CHARGE HERE, IS THE FOREMOST FIGURE, SEP. 1916



WOUNDED SERBIAN AT THE GORNICEVO DRESSING STATION, SEP. 1916



set by the C.M.O. and the members of her staff of officers I have above enumerated. They never spared themselves, and such an example could not but have a beneficial effect on the whole unit. Secondly, a certain proportion of the unit had been in Serbia before and during the retreat, and knew something of the conditions they were up against. Thirdly, the fact that wounded men were lying out on the surrounding mountains waiting till a hospital was ready to take them to, fired the Scottish Women to a white heat. Fourthly and lastly, there was a certain element of luck in the personnel itself. I mean in its composition—in the really extraordinary manner they fitted in together. All the more was this noticeable if there be any truth in the dictum that women do not find it easy to pull together. I would not wish to be understood to belittle the selection powers of Dr. Russell, mainly concerned with this business at the Edinburgh headquarters. But sixty to seventy is a large unit. In this case when a special post had to be filled—operating-theatre orderly, for instance—a member was found to fit the billet and do well in it. It need scarcely be said that for the latter post a person of a certain temperament plus nerves would be required. Well, they found her all right, and yet she saw her first operation in the Ostrovo camp operating theatre. And so it was in other cases. I have seen many a far smaller party of men go to pieces when a stress came. The Scottish Women did not crack, and each pulled her weight. And they had their reward, for it is beyond dispute that they saved many Serbian soldiers' lives after Gornicevo and Kajmakcalan, men who must have died but for the work of the Scottish Women in the Ostrovo Hospital.

CHAPTER XIII

FINE WORK OF THE SERBIAN DRESSING STATIONS AND THE S.W.H. AMBULANCES : KRUSOGRAD

THE little field dressing stations of the 3rd Serbian Army close up behind the firing line were not the least interesting feature of the medical side of the war to the layman. Nowhere, perhaps, does one get quite so near the bed rock of human nature as at a dressing station. Under no other set of conditions perhaps is laid bare so often all that is best in mankind. Men suffering excruciating agony may be seen, with a twisted smile, begging the doctor to attend first to a comrade, or a neighbouring prone form quite unknown to them, insisting that his case is worse than theirs, and that they can wait. Stoical courage, almost superhuman, is shown too under the doctor's hands. Medical men up at the Front see much of this side of human nature, and under the great stress of work take it more or less for granted whilst according their admiration without stint. It always left me dumbfounded. And beyond the dressing station and right up on to the battlefield what wonderful courage is shown ! The sight which always seemed to be the most pitiful was the case of the wounded and exhausted men who found their own way

back to the dressing station. Here a couple might be met helping each other along, each sufficiently badly wounded to be a stretcher case; but both stretchers and men to carry them were equally scarce with the Serbians. There two wounded are supporting between them a half fainting man who is dragging a leg painfully, cheerfully putting off the minute when they themselves may receive treatment to ensure the safety of their comrade. They are magnificent these common, one had almost written trivial, everyday incidents, which are to be seen in hundreds between the firing line and the dressing station.

And these little Serbian dressing stations themselves! The Great War could show few better illustrations, few more pitiful or pathetic illustrations, of what are to all intents and purposes the front line of the Medical Service, than the dressing stations of the Serbian Army out Gornicevo way or on the Drina below Kajmaktalan during September, 1916.

The Gornicevo dressing station was the first one our ambulances went up to. It was moved up as the army advanced, but the name may be left to it. Picture a handful of small bell tents, mostly old and in poor repair, pitched at the side of the mountain road. The ground—earth or rock—inside covered with a thin layer of straw, and on this straw lay the wounded, the severely wounded cases, many already beyond the help of man, even when armed with the highest surgical skill. There was no room for the sitting cases inside these tents, although many of these latter cases had bad wounds. They lay or sat outside on a little straw when the latter could be procured. Hard by was a slightly larger tent—the floor of earth or mud—which formed the mess and sleeping

accommodation of the Serbian Medical Staff of the station. There was no luxury here. A hard severe campaigning life the Serbian doctors led, accompanied by a terrific stress of work as the wounded poured into the tiny station in numbers which often entirely swamped its powers to deal with them. Up in this place the wounded lay after receiving dressings until they could be removed to the Casualty Clearing Stations. From the day of the fight for the Gornicevo crest, this station, with the shortest interval of rest, usually utilised in moving forward to keep pace with the advance, the rapid advance, of the fighting Serbs, was overflowing with wounded. The majority of the sitting cases were removed in carts, and in fact in every form of conveyance procurable. Those who could walk were dispatched on foot. The greater number of the severely wounded were removed in the ambulances of Mrs. Harley's * Transport Column and our own and were brought down to our hospital. The number of lives which the hospital saved for the Serbians must have been considerable in those days of severe fighting both from here and from Kajmaktalan. Too high praise cannot be given to the Serbian doctors who had charge of these dressing stations, for

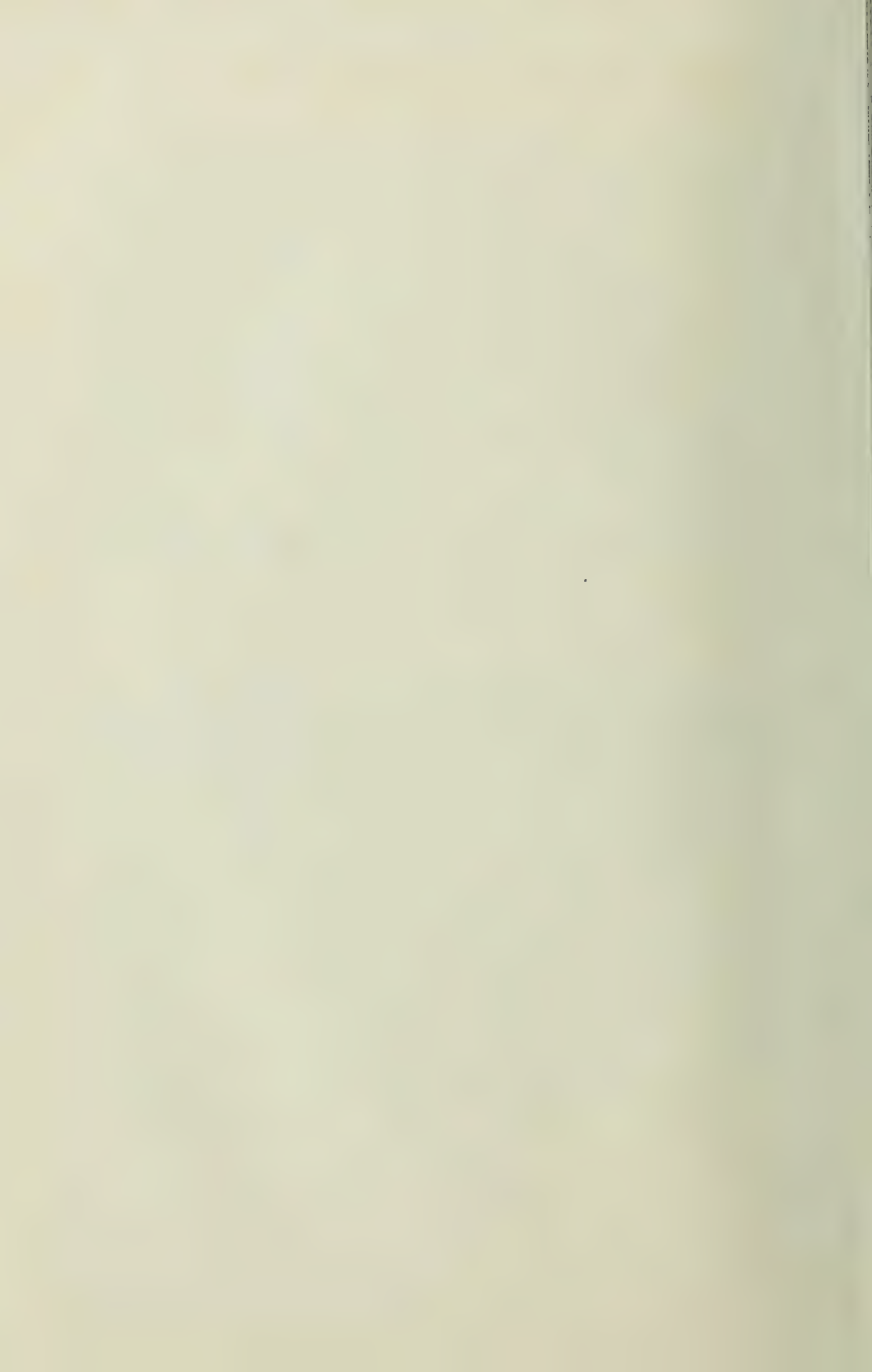
* Whilst in France in the following March I read in the *Times* with profound sorrow of Mrs. Harley's death at Monastir on the 7th of that month. She was wounded by a shell, the town being under bombardment at the time, and died on her way to hospital. I had watched her work in Macedonia with amazement. She spent long hours in her ambulances going up the rocky mountain tracks to the dressing stations full of a fire and energy remarkable in one of her age. She had a great love for the Serbians and her one wish was to get to the Front. Almost one thinks she would have elected such a death as she has so nobly met. A worthy representative (she was a sister of Lord French) of a great family. They carried her down to Salonika, where she was accorded an impressive military funeral; Prince George with his staff and the chiefs and staffs of the Allied nations, both military and civil, following her to the grave.



THE LATE MRS. HARLEY, SISTER OF LORD FRENCH, AND ONE OF HER AMBULANCES WITH WOUNDED. MRS. HARLEY IS WEARING A SERBIAN OFFICER'S CAP AND A SHEEPSKIN WAISTCOAT, A GIFT FROM AUSTRALIA. ASSISTANT MATRON HARVEY IS STANDING NEAR THE AMBULANCE



COLONEL A. K. STOJCHITCH, WOUNDED ON KAJMAKTCALAN, ARRIVING AT THE HOSPITAL



the manner in which they performed these first dressings. They earned high commendation from our own doctors and R.A.M.C. officers alike. There was never an instance of a slipped bandage in our hospital. When it is remembered that these mountain roads, down which the wounded after leaving their hands had to be brought, were practically only bridle-paths, the efficiency of the Serbian doctors, who lived a lonely hard life in these remote localities, was of a high order. The road up to Gornicevo was an extraordinary track to take an ambulance car, even a Ford one, when we first made its acquaintance. And, mind you, all the ambulances were driven by the girl chauffeurs. After leaving Ostrovo village the track runs, as I have said, along the north edge of Lake Ostrovo, nearly two miles of deep sand furrowed by some dozen or more deep parallel ruts which went in and out of deeper holes and gullies in which the car more often than not stuck and had to be pushed out by main force. You could take your choice between the pairs of ruts, but whichever pair you picked out invariably appeared the worst. Then the climb up the mountain by the rocky track began, and though subsequently improved it remained a rocky track for most of the way, plentifully bestrewn with boulders and projecting rock masses. In many places two cars could only just pass on the track with little to spare, and as the journey was usually made midst innumerable transport, horses, mules, carts, ammunition caissons, often with teams of eight horses, men mounted and afoot, and cars of all sorts and conditions in long convoys, the arduous nature of the journey can be dimly imagined. The cars boiled, literally boiled, going up, and for this reason alone had to be stopped several times to cool

down ; and the boiling usually upset the oiling, and the cars wouldn't restart. But if going up was a difficult and appallingly bumpy business, the coming down was worse. No Ford car brakes which are necessarily light would hold on these mountain tracks. The cars bumped down, now heeling over on one side, now on the other, as the wheels jolted over great masses of rock or boulders it was impossible to avoid, and on the steep slopes on many a journey the reverse was the only method of preventing the car taking charge when the brakes became functionless—and this with two badly wounded men on the stretchers behind. A passenger, doctor, nurse, orderly or any one available, always accompanied the driver nominally to look after the wounded—though they rarely wanted much attention *en route*. It was the car which needed that, either to push behind through deep sand in which one got smothered, to shove it with the help of passers-by out of ruts and holes and so on.

But the road to Gornicevo, bad as it was, was nothing to the Drina. I have said that this was the dressing station below Kajmaktcalan (where the big fights of September 18th to 30th took place) situated some 5000 odd feet up the mountain side. I have seen a good deal of the Himalaya both eastern and western, and have tramped and ridden miles in those beautiful mountains on tracks and bridle-paths rocky enough and steep and narrow enough to please any one. But it never entered my head in those days that I should see cars using, and be in cars using, such tracks. I should never have thought it possible that cars could negotiate such tracks. And yet this is what the S.W.H. girl drivers had to do on the Drina, probably the finest feat girls have ever done. Due north the track led after leaving Ostrovo

for $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles of deep sand. Then the climb begins and it starts as it means to continue on an extraordinary steep gradient only varying to get steeper. The track was narrow, innocent of all improvement when we first knew it, with complicated turns, round which the cars invariably stuck and required propping up with stones to prevent them sliding backwards in spite of brakes. We got into the habit of carrying a few heavy rocks on the foot-board. As soon as the car stopped the passenger had to hop out, seize the biggest piece of rock, and get it under the wheel of the slowly slipping car. If you were not quick enough the car had gained sufficient momentum to go over the rock, and a frantic hunt would take place for a piece big enough to pull it up. This, be it remembered, with a steep slope or precipice to go over if the driver failed to keep an open eye backwards or the passenger was not smart enough with his props. It was lively work the Drina, but they got used to it, and so did the M.T. people; although at that time these latter were not going far up—only about a third of the distance to the dressing station. You'd see a long convoy of Ford vans loaded with ammunition propped up in the same fashion and cooling themselves (and I might add their heated and swearing drivers). The ammunition and food supplies, etc., are taken on from here up the steep mountain track by horse and bullock cart, pack-horse, mule and donkey. The help the ambulances invariably received from the tired soldiery, English, French and Serbs, going up to the Front or coming down, was very nice to witness. You will see that going up was no picnic, but coming down was a somewhat fearsome feat with failing brakes. The rocky nature of the track and its narrowness made it difficult when one takes

into account the constant stream of transport and the jams which so often occurred. To meet a long convoy of horse-drawn ammunition carts at a corner with restive horses was far from a joke, and one breathed a prayer when one got off with no more than the point of a shaft driven into the side of the car, and if at the same time you had the inside of the track. For the rule of keeping to the right was strictly adhered to for all, and cars had to take the outside and risk the precipice, if it was on the right, even when the passing vehicle was drawn by frightened and plunging horses. That we did not have serious accidents is due as much as anything to the skilful driving and extraordinary coolness of the girl drivers. And I speak from personal knowledge of cars, drivers, and roads. And there were of course continual accidents. In one of the worst the car went off the road down a precipice and two Tommies in it were burnt to death. As you commence to climb the track after leaving the deep sand at the foot of the mountain, the road runs through scrub with some oak trees. Near the upper limits of this a pretty village embosomed in trees, elms and oaks, is reached, the houses built of rough stone with red tiled or slate roofs—a typical mountain village. A temporary small dressing station here of three tents affords a resting-place to the walking wounded cases—for it is a long hot (or at night bitter cold) walk down from the upper dressing station. Above the village the mountain side is bare of trees, covered with patches of bracken already commencing to change to bronze and red, showing that the first autumn frosts have set in. Looking back a most glorious view of Lake Ostrovo with its encircling mountains is obtained with, beyond, the Gornicevo ridge, and the road and railway up the western



A COMMON SIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN TRACKS OF MACEDONIA. EN ROUTE
TO THE DRINA DRESSING STATION, OCT. 1916



THROUGH THE SWIRLING DUST IN A DEEP NARROW GLOOMY DEFILE ON THE
GREAT KAJMAKTCALAN—AMMUNITION TRANSPORT



shore of the lake, backed by mountainous ranges to the west of the Monastir plain. Continuing ever upwards over the stony track the crest of a high ridge is ultimately reached. The path here drops into a narrow gloomy defile which only permits of the passage of transport one way at a time. A Serbian soldier is stationed with a white flag on a pinnacle of rock, and signals to another on another peak across the defile and far above us. Traffic can only pass one way at a time. Transport is on the way down, and we have to wait here till the road is clear. A jam down in that defile is a terrific business. We were in several on occasions through mistakes on the part of the signallers or owing to convoys refusing to halt, and the pandemonium, confusion, and dust which reigned as a consequence is indescribable. This defile reminded me of some of those seen on the Afghan and Baluchistan frontiers in which, in our past Indian frontier campaigns, we have suffered from ambushades. The photograph well depicts its appearance, for it exhibits to the life the gloomy impression which the defile must have left on the minds of all who have passed through it on the business of this war.

After negotiating the defile and climbing up the back of a ridge the upper dressing station was reached. On the day I first went up the final assault on Kajmaktealan was still to take place. The troops some three miles ahead were resting, and things were comparatively quiet. The dressing station consisted of a few tents for the staff and a long shed built of interlaced saplings, the interstices of wall and roof being stuffed with dead bracken. In this the seriously wounded were lying in rows on a layer of bracken. But for the bitter cold—for it was cold up here in the daytime—they were better

off than in the wretched accommodation at Gornicevo. Many hundreds had already passed through this station, and the doctor's staff had been very heavily worked. It was a pretty spot, the tents and huts placed in a grove of beech and oak trees which clothed the slope at the back. One realised up here that autumn had descended upon the mountains. The bracken was changed to gold and brown, and the trees and mountains were rapidly putting on their autumn garb. It was a wonderfully pretty spot, and the view over Lakes Ostrovo and Petersko and the wild chaotic mass of mountains in which they lie buried were magnificent.

But emphatically it is not a country to fight in, not under modern conditions of warfare. Even with unlimited transport of all kinds and men to get it up to the fighting line it would be difficult to guarantee the armies against either scarcity of ammunition or food. And the Serbs had no such abundance. The way they have fought is magnificent—stupendous. But it has meant an untold amount of extra exposure and suffering—both of which they are bearing with unbelievable fortitude and patience. What the Serbians have been through has to be seen to be credited. All honour to a brave race.

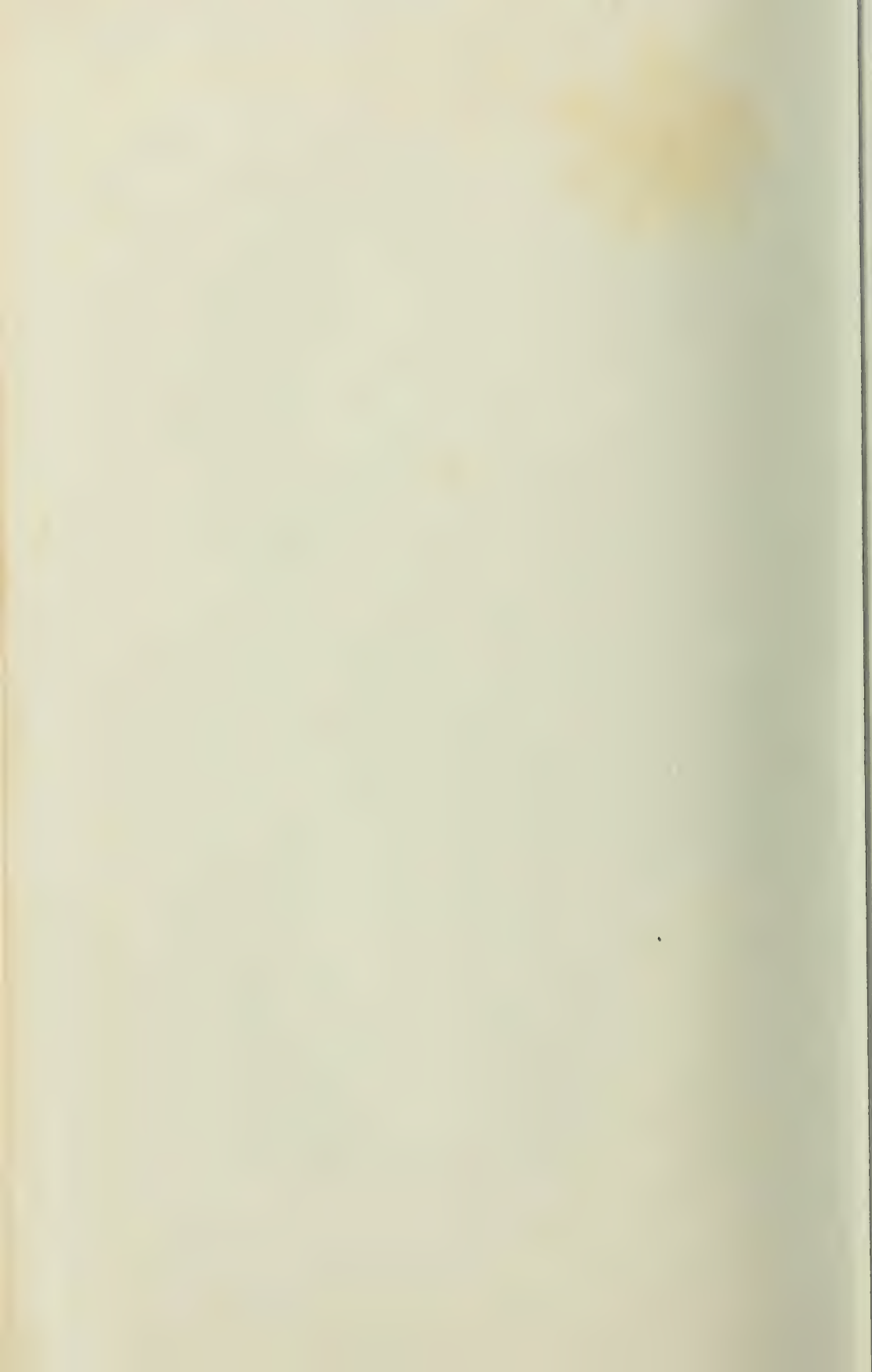
It would be impossible here to deal at any length with the wonderful way the wounded were brought down from the dressing stations by these girls, or to describe in detail the coolness, resource and spirit they displayed. I will take three incidents from many. It was on the Drina. An ambulance going up to the dressing station got its off wheels on to a large rock mass and fell over on to its side. Riddell, of the R.A.M.C., who was with the driver, Miss Green, was shot out and rolled down the slope, being pulled up by a rock. He

picked himself up, gave himself a shake, and finding he was not dead, climbed up to see what had happened to car and girl. There lay the car on its side, the wheels still revolving, and the girl still clinging to her wheel, also lying on her side. The engine was stopped, the driver hauled out and stood on her feet, and the first thing those two did was to swear at each other because, though each had a camera, neither had thought of taking a photograph before she was hauled out! Another occasion, on the Gornicevo trek this time. I had been up to near the firing line, and on my way back in the late afternoon we picked up one of the ambulances on its way down with wounded. As the driver, Miss Ross, was alone, I transferred into it. The ambulance had three wounded aboard. There was the usual trouble with brakes and so on, but the bottom of the long hill was safely reached. "Only one short steep bit more and we are off the hill," I had just remarked, when round the bend came a Ford ammunition van with a Serbian driver. We had to take the outside, a nasty place, and went within a foot of the edge. The Serb, in trying to leave too much room, got his off wheels up on to a big rock on the inner slope, slipped off this and crashed into us, his near fore wheel splintering into fragments and the axle jamming under our near hind. For a moment we thought we were over the precipice. I hopped out. Appalling cries and yells came from beneath the Serb's car, but before I could discover where the man was he crawled out quite unhurt. It was the car and the dressing down he would get that he was thinking of. The road was blocked, convoys of Fords coming to a halt above and below us. They had run out of ammunition at the Serb front up at Krusograd that day

and were working at high pressure. Half a dozen Tommies ran up. We tried to lift the cars apart, but we were too few. As a Tommy remarked, "If the car had hit you a little higher up you'd have gone over all right." He said it quite appreciatively. Accidents of this kind were all in the day's work with him. An M.T. subaltern, Dibben, who had been on the *Fraulein*, appeared; more Tommies descended upon us, for all the world like vultures on a carcase, and in a twinkling our car was lifted bodily from the other, and the disabled one lifted on to the upper slope and propped there with large boulders. The ammunition boxes were at once unloaded from her; one of the empty cars above was lifted bodily round—there was no room to turn her, and precious little to get her facing up the hill again—loaded up, and dispatched on her way to the front. The M.T. methods, and discipline are perfect. We were then examined. Nothing but a mudguard bent down, jamming one wheel. This righted we went on our way, and eventually arrived back home with nothing more serious than a couple of punctures in the deep sand, one after dark. A little incident which occurred at the block shows the kindness of Tommy's heart. The convoy of cars above the jam were empty, returning for ammunition. When we had got the road clear we found every one of the empty cars full up with wounded Serbs, walking cases, waiting patiently to be carried on to Ostrovo. "Where on earth did they come from?" I inquired. "Oh," replied, the subaltern, "they got in whilst we were at work. They always do this whenever possible, and Tommy always takes them on, even though it means shortening his period of rest." Small wonder that Tommy is liked, that the Mechanical Transport are sworn by by one



THE C.M.O. AND MISS BEDFORD AT THE ENTRANCE TO OSTROVO CAMP. ASSISTANT MATRON HARVEY IS ALSO SEEN AND HER ASSISTANT MISS REID (LEFT) TALKING TO TWO SERBIANS



and all out there "on the road" in Macedonia, where they sweat and toil and shiver by day and night and oft go hungry if working at the head of the line when ammunition has run short and has to take precedence of everything, rations and all. And Tommy likes his comrade the Serb, for he recognises in him a fine soldier, a merry-hearted fellow, childish in many of his ways, but always willing to share what he has, and ever patient and plucky under suffering and pain. My third incident illustrates without any endorsement the resourcefulness and pluck and spirit animating the girl drivers. It was on the Drina again. The ambulances left early one morning. Some vicissitudes were experienced. One car, however, got up and back with wounded by 1 p.m., and set off again for a second journey. On the way back the driver came across an ambulance which had broken down. After spending some time in futile efforts to start it she offered to take over the wounded—luckily there were only two—but she already had three. Night had fallen long before she restarted, and she was alone. Her drive down that mountain track was nervy work. But she stuck to it and eventually got back to the camp at 11 p.m. She had brought down seven wounded men that day (the ambulances only hold two lying-down cases or three sitting), and brought them down the Drina. It was a marvellous plucky feat. Her name is Miss Wardle.

I had not had the opportunity of seeing anything of the operations which were being undertaken to the north and north-west of Gornicevo (after the fall of that place), nor of the country in which they were being carried out. Accordingly, I set out on a brilliant morning at the end of the first week in October

with this object in view. I went up as an extra with Major Wiltshire, R.A.M.C., who was staying with us for a few days, in one of the ambulances to the dressing station in this direction, intending to find my own way further up. The station had been moved forward, and was now some four or five miles north-west of Gornicevo, this being the first visit of the cars to the new place. On reaching the village our road turned sharp to the north through the latter, the street so narrow that in places there was only just sufficient width for the passage of the car. On leaving the village the mountain road climbs up on to a watershed which stretches for some seven or eight miles—a great stony, bare, windswept upland over which a piercing cold very strong head wind was blowing. On either side of the track miserable little trenches protected with low rough piles of stones stretched in segments across the mountain-side, every yard of which had been fought over by the Serbians when forcing back the Bulgarians on Krusograd after the Gornicevo fight. Higher up the trenches, built of stone, assumed the grouse-butt form, so commonly seen on these mountains. These were scattered about in numbers and gave evidence of having been the scene of bitter struggles. Three miles or so from Gornicevo we came upon a line of trenches facing towards the village, the line to which the Bulgars had retreated after the capture of the latter. Unexploded shells and cartridges and shell cases littered the ground. It is a deadly country to fight in, practically treeless save for a low tree here and there, of gnarled and rugged shape when not smashed to pieces by shell fire. In one place lower down the slope a patch of wood was passed torn and riven by the guns. A French officer gave me a

curious and interesting reason for the treeless state of Macedonia, for the accuracy of which I cannot vouch. He said it was supposed to be due to an old Turkish law which fixed the amount of taxes to be paid by landowners according to the number of trees they had growing on their land. To diminish the amount of taxes to be paid the landlord cleared off all his trees and thus brought the hillsides to their present state of barrenness. This would be very like the Turk. Its effect, however, has been to reduce the value of the agricultural land at the foot of the hills owing to the covering up of the soil by rocks and debris, the result of erosion in the hills now unprotected by trees, and to render the climate more unhealthy ; this latter opinion being widely held, and I think correctly so. The new dressing station was found near the top of the ridge, and from this point a fine view of the Monastir plain immediately below was obtainable. Florina, distinct to the naked eye, lay slightly to south-west, and Monastir, which required the glasses to make out, to the north-west. Between the two lay the strong Kenali entrenchments of the Bulgars, with the French and Russian lines a few miles to the south, both distinctly visible in the clear atmosphere. Above the French lines hung motionless a sausage observation balloon.

The dressing station had much the same appearance as the Gornicevo one already described. It was packed with wounded, and carts were being filled up with the less serious cases on our arrival. Whilst the ambulances were being loaded we had some lunch in a sheltered nook out of the keen wind on the hillside, and this picnic with the stone-built butts around us, so curiously like those we use for so different a purpose, had an extraordinary resemblance to a grouse-shooting lunch on a Scottish

moor ; for the hillside here had a scattered scrub growth of juniper in places.

An interview with the Medical Officers soon put me *au fait* as to the position of the Serbian firing line. The only question was how to get there. The return did not worry me as I had the rest of the day and night free. I was introduced to two officers who had been through the recent fighting in this part. The junior of the two, a youngster barely twenty-three years of age, who had seen much service already, spoke English fluently, and said he was half English. He told me they had had a very bad time on these hills, as the barbed wire was rarely cut sufficiently to enable them to get through it without terrific casualties—their artillery being insufficient in number and weight, and the shooting not of the best, for want of sufficient practice. He and his companion were now going up to the Front to join the cavalry, who were going to try and come in on the right. In saying good-bye he remarked : “ We may not meet again. I may get a bullet.”

I found out what I wanted. These officers were going to get a lift on in a Ford ammunition car, a convoy being due here. I learnt that the advanced ammunition dump had been shifted to Krusograd, ten miles on, the day before. It was great luck. I joined the convoy. My driver was an Irishman who solemnly warned me that the road was very bad. But I knew my Macedonian roads by then, and they could present no further terrors. The road dropped steadily and entered a narrow ravine which quickly became a defile, the bed of a watercourse running between steep cliffs. This bed consisted of sand interspersed with large loose boulders. Before we entered the defile proper we passed several dead or

dying horses (how I wished I had brought a revolver with me), one of the bitterest aftermaths of a receding fighting line.

Just at the entrance to the defile we came upon a stout wire entanglement which ran up over the hillside. The parts which had been stretched across the stream bed were in six to ten foot lengths, about five feet high, and made apparently so that they could be removed to allow of the passage of the retreating Bulgars and then replaced. The defile itself, which runs for several miles, exactly resembled those seen and used in a similar manner in Baluchistan. It serpentine in an extraordinary fashion.

For several miles you could never see more than fifteen to twenty yards ahead, and in many places it was only wide enough to take a car. The jams occurring in such a place can be better imagined than described. The river-bed drops gradually the whole length. Eventually the sides lowered, the bed broadened out a little, and we finally ran into a narrow valley and picked up the track which runs over the hills to the west (for there is an alternative route to the defile, though by all accounts an infinitely worse one). A stream bordered by willows and poplars runs along the north side of the valley, and this, after about three-quarters of a mile, we crossed, and had reached Krusograd, a pretty but very dirty little village buried in a grove of trees. The tiny valley lost amongst the hills is dotted with trees either standing singly or in little clumps, and under each and all were encamped soldiers or horses, mules and donkeys. The place was seething with troops. We were just behind the Serbian trenches. Across the stream the ground rose to a low ridge, all plough land, and this area was seamed

with trenches protected by wire entanglements. All yesterday and last night the Serbian assault of these trenches had been carried on, the Bulgars being ejected in the early hours of the morning, retiring to a position two to three miles away. The Irishman had told me something of this. The little M.T. party under a subaltern had momentarily expected throughout the night to be blown to bits.

The ammunition dump was close to the far bank of the stream. We pulled up there and I got out and, whilst the convoy was being unloaded, had a look at the wretched village; it had escaped shelling to a great extent, but there was little to shell, the guns on both sides firing over it. From this point the ammunition was being taken up by cart and pack mules to the trenches about half a mile or so away.

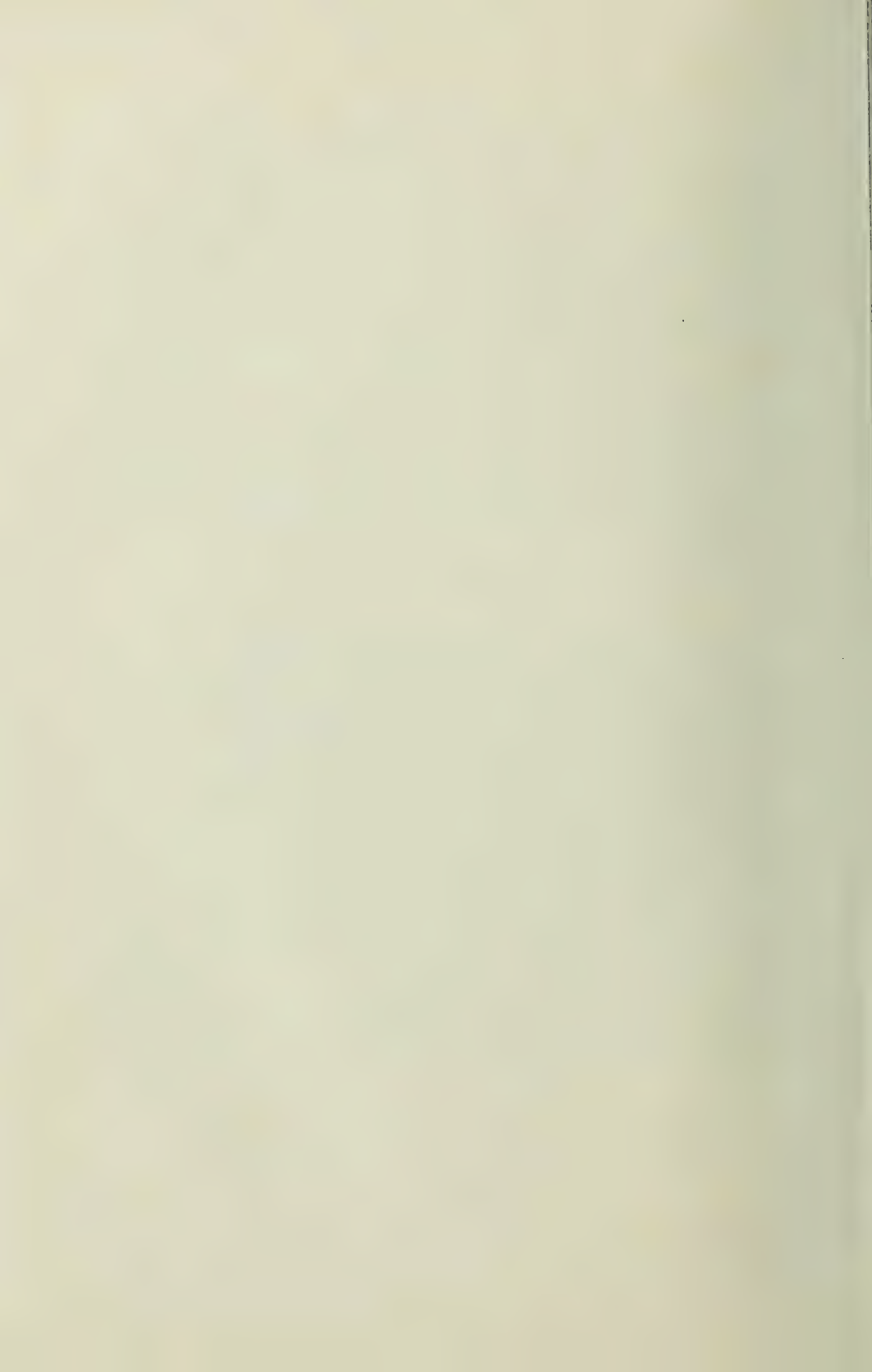
Recrossing the stream we went up to the three or four bell tents which formed the M.T. camp. Here I found the subaltern. He offered me a very acceptable drink, but said he was sorry he could not give me lunch as they were without rations. The position up here was sufficiently serious. The Serbs had run out of rifle ammunition. What this meant all acquainted with modern warfare will appreciate. The convoy which had brought me up represented the subaltern's detachment up here. As soon as they had had their very attenuated meal the men would go back on their long trek to bring up more ammunition. What had become of their rations he did not know, but anyway everything had now to give way to the ammunition. He was going back down the line with the convoy to see that a message went through to the Colonel commanding at the Ostrovo camp, detailing the exact present position of the Serbs.



UNLOADING FORD AMMUNITION VANS AT KRUSOGRAD DUMP. THE SERBIANS HAD RUN OUT OF AMMUNITION AFTER THE CAPTURE OF KRUSOGRAD A FEW HOURS BEFORE THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN



A STRIPPED FORD VAN—THE M.T. SUBALTERN'S PATROL CAR, KRUSOGRAD, OCT. 1916



I whistled at this budget of information. If the Bulgars counter-attacked here it would be a bad business. With a lead of some twenty to thirty miles of mountain tracks between Krusograd and Ostrovo, and Ford vans the only possible rapid conveyance, the position was sufficiently grave. I was to witness that day the magnificent way it was grappled with all down that long difficult line of communication.

Having ascertained that I could be given a lift back, I left the subaltern to the work he was engaged upon after going over the positions of the Serbs here on the map I had with me (the subaltern had no map—said only the C.O.'s of the companies had them!), and went off to carry out some investigations of my own. The possibility of the hospital being moved in this direction had formed one of my objects in coming on this stunt. But this I had long ago dismissed as impracticable.

On the hills east and south-east immediately above the little valley Serbian batteries were stationed, and these opened fire soon after my arrival, and continued an intermittent bombardment all the afternoon.

At the end of three hours or so the convoy began to re-form, and I returned. As I came up I heard the subaltern say to his orderly, "Cut me off a slice and give the rest to the men." This was in reference to a loaf of bread, which already was not a whole one. It was all the food that remained in the subaltern's tent. And there was scant chance of his seeing more that night. We started off at the head of the convoy in a stripped Ford, *i.e.* a Ford with the sides and top taken off, leaving only the driving seat and a planked bottom at the back without sides. This type is the patrol car of the M.T. subalterns in these parts. Driving in one of these

machines is a nerve-racking, bone-aching, fearsome joy. A corporal drove, I sat beside him (and you have to hold pretty tight not to be shot out, as the space left by the driver is of the scantiest), and the subaltern squatted behind. The orders were to go ahead as his mission was most urgent. The pace we went up that defile was astonishing. Only constant practice on the Macedonian roads on the part of the driver could have enabled him to take the car along in a dubious safety. The stream bed was mostly dry, but here and there were intervals of slushy mud. We went through these in a miniature shower bath of liquid mud which soon covered us from top to toe. Luckily we were only once pulled up for traffic, and that took some moving. At the upper end of the defile we passed a small convoy of ambulance mules carrying wounded on side saddles. The difficulty of getting the wounded back from Krusograd, where there are still numbers, is appalling. At the dump at the dressing station things were much the same. Nothing had yet appeared from lower down the line. We therefore ran on to Gornicevo, through that village and down towards the long defile. At its head we found a new ammunition dump just being started, and an M.T. subaltern (one of the two who had been aboard the *Fraulein*) in charge. The gravity of the position was, he thought, understood lower down, but my companion determined to go on and see for himself. As I was now in no hurry I remained at the new dump, intending to return with my friend. All sorts of delays occurred, and we did not get back to the M.T. mess till dinner time. Things were humming in that camp. Apparently every possible car was being turned out, and two companies were detailed to work the upper line from



WOUNDED SERBIANS BEING BROUGHT BACK FROM THE FIRING LINE ON A MULE



THE M.T. CAMP AT KRUSOGRAD. VILLAGE IN CLUMP OF TREES. A HEAVY BOMBARDMENT IS GOING ON IN THE HILLS ON RIGHT WHERE SHELLS ARE SEEN BURSTING

the dressing station through the defile to Krusograd. Only one of the men at the table had ever been to Krusograd or knew anything of the conditions. Three left the mess tent as soon as we arrived, in charge of the line of noisy cars, each with its twin lights blazing, which were forming up on the road outside the camp. When I left the camp at about 11 p.m. all but two officers had departed for the road and the C.O., instead of turning into his bed, got into a car to go up the line, where he expected to spend the night and next day. They hoped to replenish Krusograd in twenty-four to thirty-six hours, but how they were going to tackle the defile and prevent bad jams in it and consequent delay was an open question.

It need scarcely be added that the job was done, and the men at the head of the line at Krusograd got their rations—next day.

I may add that I have no personal interest in the Ford car, which to some may appear to come rather frequently into these pages. We all know that the British motor engineering shops were turned into ammunition makers. On our front, the Serbian front, the transport of the main bulk of the supplies, once the short length of the fifty-mile strip of the Salonika plain had been left behind, depended on the M.T. light transport service of Ford vans, and the efficiency of that service, all run by men of the new armies, was a marvel to watch. I have yet to see the track along which our Tommies cannot take their Ford vans, and do not believe it exists. On one front at least we are working cheaply—not perhaps because we intended to or wanted to, but because this particular car with its easily duplicated parts manages to stand the racket and do the work

on these mountain tracks. To see Tommy, cap on back of head, a fag in the corner of his mouth, face, eyebrows, and hair grey with dust, driving his Ford through or over everything up and down those awful mountain tracks, is to see a sight which makes one gasp and hold the breath—till one gets used to it. “Six weeks is the life of this ’ere car,” says Tommy. He is not quite correct, but they are cheap, very cheap, at the price paid and for the work obtained.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLEFIELD OF KAJMAKTCALAN

(The following account was written down on the battlefield itself.)

THE Battle of Kajmaktcalan was fought, as I have narrated, by the Serbians between the middle and end of September, 1916. The mountain is the highest in the Moglena Ranges, in which the newly reformed Serbian armies took up positions facing the Bulgarians in the past summer. On the capture of the exceedingly strongly entrenched positions on the Kajmaktcalan depended the further advance into the Cherna loop, and as it subsequently appeared the capture of Monastir itself.

It was early in October that the Serbian colonel, who had been wounded in the arm in the fight and been sent down to the hospital at Ostrovo, offered to conduct us—Dr. Bennett and myself—over the battlefield. Colonel Stojchitch had lost two-thirds of his regiment in the attacks, had acquitted himself with gallantry and, as we heard on our way up, had been promoted to the command of a brigade. He is a fine specimen of a magnificent fighting race.

We left Ostrovo at dawn, climbing up the lower slopes of the great mountain in the touring car by the execrable

bridle track. High up on the mountain-side, as I have said, is the Serb dressing station which our ambulances so often visited, and getting there and back was no child's play as we have seen. We eventually arrived at the dressing station without mishap, where the Serbian medical staff insisted on our staying and partaking of the inevitable Turkish coffee and cigarettes. Cars had never been farther up than this, but we decided to try another few kilometres and so sent on the ponies to a little upland valley situated above the tree limit, where also we proposed to have an early lunch. Leaving the dressing station we continued on upward. The mountains are for the most part bare, consisting of a white gneiss giving a streaky appearance to the hillsides. But there are patches of fine beech forest here and there with scant juniper and a little pine at the uppermost levels. Clumps of young beech seen in places make it evident that the unchecked goat and sheep grazing which has taken place over these hills from time immemorial is now chiefly responsible for their present deplorable state of barrenness.

The battlefield for which we were making was situated, however, far above the forest level, and we had left the latter before we finally reached the little upland valley. The similarity of the mountains and of the little valley itself to parts of the Himalaya is extraordinary and it was easy to imagine oneself back again on one of those many camping trips in the happy days of peace. Here the scenery was the same—the sunlight on the mountains, the flicker of it in the little stream, and the autumn tints on the low plants growing in the valley with the dead flowers and seed heads attached to them reminded me of many an upland valley in the Himalaya. Only the

scene was here marred, however interesting it is in the plains, marred by the eternal stream of armed men on horse and afoot, carts, mules, donkeys, etc., going up and down on the business of war. How absolutely out of place, how incongruous it seemed amongst these great hills, these eternal mountains, that man should have the effrontery to bring his petty strifes up into their great silent spaces. The C.M.O. asked where the shell-holes and craters were as none were visible. On the barren rugged slopes little impression could be made by even man's biggest guns, and save in soft patches which we occasionally found higher up, there were few shell scars of any importance to show that a great battle had been waged up the great mountain side. The various positions could be seen, and the colonel pointed out three main Bulgarian ones which had to be taken as they advanced up to the final tussle on the crest of the great mountain far above us. The trenches, at times good and of fair depth but usually mere apologies in the hard rock with breastworks built up like the sungars of the Afridi, were much *en evidence*, and as we climbed up the barren mountain side on our ponies it was easy to trace out the whole battle. And what a task it was—all practically in the open. Down from one great shoulder of a mountain into a dip and then up the swelling barren stony curves of the great Kajmaktcalan (see Frontispiece). It was a task fit for gods instead of puny men, but men in the shape of Serbs accomplished it, though at what cost is best known to themselves. They must have lost heavily in killed, for no quarter was given on either side if they could help it. But these men fought as gods, for on that crest lay the door to their country and what man would not fight for that! Each man who came out

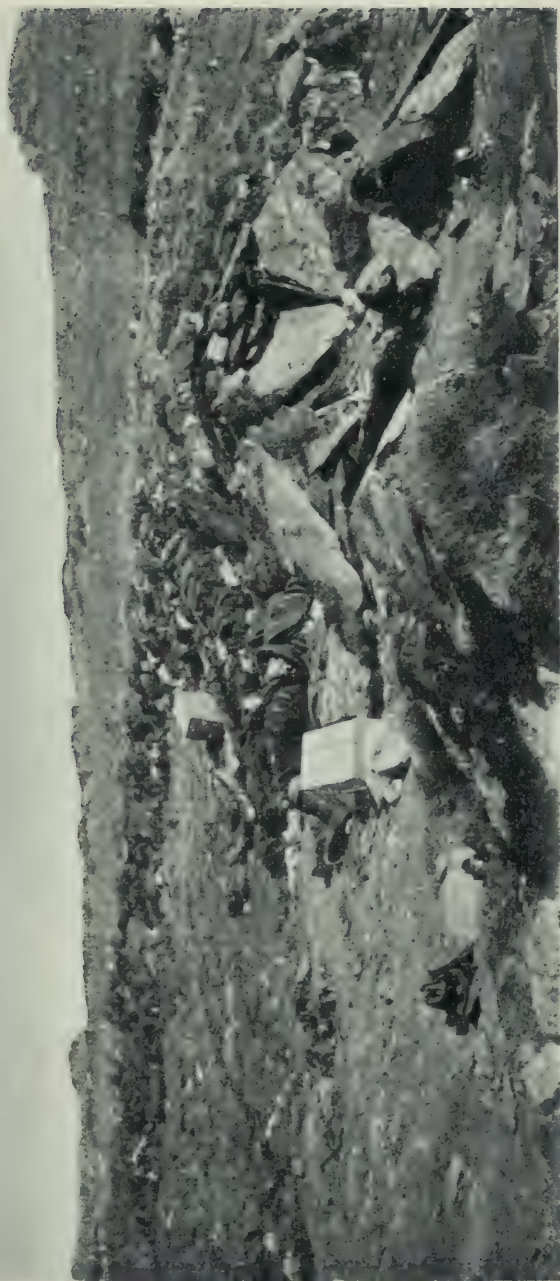
alive from that battle will feel to his dying day that he had a hand in winning back his country, for when they turned the Bulgars out of the uppermost trenches and drove them routed down the opposite side they had set foot in Serbia once more. All this I understood well a little later when I stood with the colonel in the trench in which he was wounded and he explained the position and the end of that bloody struggle on the heights. To understand the position it is necessary to picture a series of ridges or great folds in the ground, each one rising upward ; as one reaches the crest of one another crest is seen beyond, and consequently one is constantly rising till finally you reach the top of a fold and from here the ground ascends gently to the absolute crest line of Kajmaktealan, where it dips steeply and more or less precipitously. Over these great folds, along which were three main lines of Bulgar trenches, the Serbs had to advance, and the positions of the advancing parties could be plainly recognised by the tiny excavations they scooped out as they lay down whilst a murderous fire poured over them ; here the spade was of little use and it was poor little heaps of stones, gathered with God knows what stress and fear tugging at the man's heart as he strived to protect himself from the deadly hail, that were most in evidence. The main trenches consisted chiefly of holes of varying size, often with a breastwork of stone which had been hurriedly built up by the Serbs on the reverse side after they had turned the Bulgars out ; but here and there, where the ground was easier to work in, the trench lines were more or less contiguous. The gun emplacements showed the same kind of formation, dug as deep as the rock would permit and then protected further by walls

and breastworks of loose rocks. The ground was covered with the wreckage of war,—rifles, bayonets, trench helmets, caps, shell cases and empty bombs, and an astonishing number of unburst shells and bombs, besides trench mortars, wire cutters of great size and strength, and large amounts of rifle cartridges. The first or lowest series of trenches was protected by a most formidable wire entanglement which stretched right across the mountain irrespective of the configuration of the ground. It must have been a superhuman task to get it into position. It had only been broken in short lengths here and there by the guns. This position was of extraordinary strength and it seemed impossible that the Serbians should have captured it as they did on the 18th–19th of September. But they had other strong ones still in front of them before the crest was reached. As we got higher a bitter wind was blowing and this froze us to the marrow in the two and a half hours we spent up there. At the bottom of the last rise on what may be called the top of the mountain we dismounted and inspected a heap of the debris of war. Here were a few rifles, most of the good ones were being collected by the Serbs as their war trophies, bayonets, Serbian (*i.e.* French) and Bulgar, trench helmets and Bulgar caps, besides bombs of all kinds, English, French and Bulgar (all the Serb equipment is either French or English, as after the defeat of last year they have of course nothing of their own and are being equipped by the British and French), clothing, cartridges, entrenching tools and all the other various paraphernalia of war. From here we selected such small trophies as it would be possible to take back. We then went on and reached the first line of trenches of the last Bulgar position. These were dug

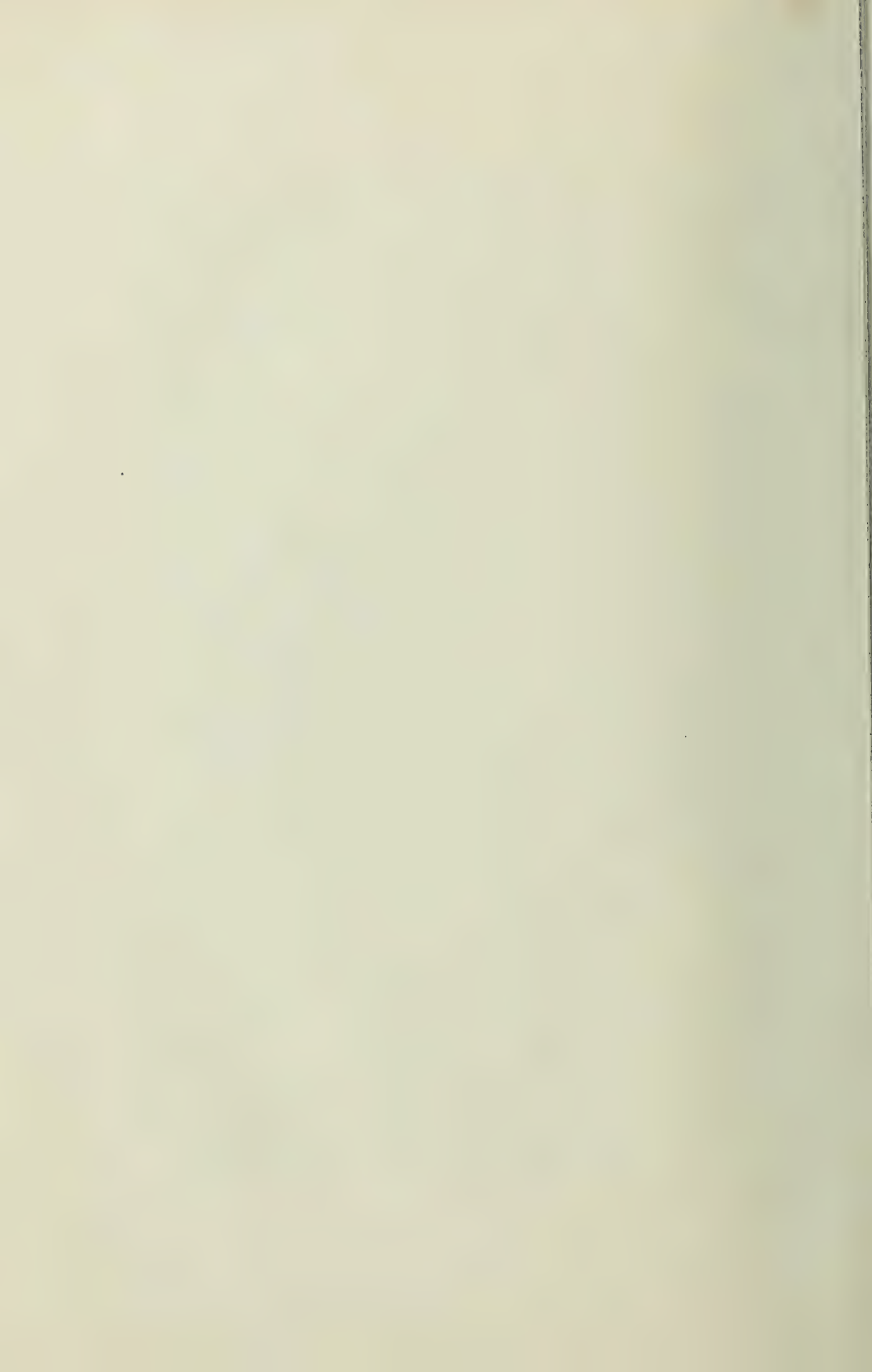
to a considerable depth, big enough for a man to stand in and provided with funk holes. It was here that we came suddenly upon the first dead. It was a ghastly sight and coming on it suddenly all the more shocking. Two Bulgars lying in the trench on their backs in contorted positions, the one with mouth open and face set in a diabolical and ferocious grin. That face was like no man's face I have ever seen, and will remain for long in my memory. The face of the other was mercifully hidden. Close by, the legs up to the knees of another man, buried under the debris caused by a bursting shell, protruded. No picture of the ghastly effects of modern warfare could be stronger than that short length of trench. As one looked down it to the right, other bodies could be seen in various positions. Coming up we had seen numbers of a very fine blackish eagle soaring low over the crest of the hill, and one guessed what their presence portended. Here we saw it in all its ghastliness. Over the high ground we proceeded, stepping down into the trench and climbing out at the other side at a little distance from the bodies, cumbered as it was with the debris of war and rocks and stones, till we came to the second line of trenches. Big, strong, deep, affairs these (for this part of the world) cut well down into the hillside and running continuous for some distance. A little way ahead were deep holes cut in the hillside and faced with stone breastworks. This was a formidable line to take (see plate facing p. 140) and here the struggle had been very fierce. Standing on the near edge of one of them the colonel pointed out the spot at which he had been wounded. He was standing on the top of the trench at the time and a man who so exposed himself, it is easy to understand, would be well beloved by his



BULGARIAN TRENCHES ON KAIMARKTAN PARTIALLY OBLITERATED BY SHELL FIRE. PARTS OF THE BODIES OF DEAD
BULGARIANS, SEMI-BURIED UNDER ROCKS AND DEERIS, ARE VISIBLE



ONE OF THE UPPER LINE OF TRENCHES ON THE SUMMIT OF KAJVAKTICALAN (8,224 FEET E.L.E.), FILLED WITH DEAD
BULGARIANS KILLED BY GAS SHELLS AND SHRAPNEL, SEP. 28-30, 1916



men. And he is. All up and down the hill to-day we saw it. What remains of his regiment is now on the line of communications, and we kept meeting his officers, all of whom greeted him with hearty effusion. But more important and far nicer was it to see the look of incredulity, changing to one of joy, on the faces of his men, N.C.O.'s and privates, when they saw their colonel, whom many of them believed dead, alive and amongst them again. It was beautiful. These trenches were well built and had been reversed by the Serbs when they took them. But they did not get this line without a terrific fight and bloody struggle for the Bulgars knew that their line near the crest was weak compared to the second. We spent some time at these trenches examining them thoroughly and they were worth it. To take them the Serbs had to come up over the open, sheltering behind rocks and whatever afforded shelter. These trenches being dug in the rock had suffered little damage from the artillery, which had, however, cut the wire entanglements, not so strong up here. Whilst the infantry attack was taking place the guns lifted and poured in their fire on to the third line higher up and more or less on level ground. Here the damage done was terrific and both trenches and ground behind them are littered with dead Bulgars, whilst in many cases all signs of a trench is obliterated. There is one of this line of trenches which is particularly hideous. Here a whole line of Bulgars was either mown down or killed by gas shells and lie in every conceivable position. At a distance they look as if they were asleep, but from their tattered clothing as one approaches one knows that their sleep is the sleep of death and that the death has been a violent and bloody one. It is a ghastly scene that one. Some of the faces are calm, but for the

most part they are contorted with rage ; and as these people are particularly swarthy, with a cast of countenance by no means prepossessing to English eyes, the looks impressed on their faces are singularly savage, relentless and ferocious. In other cases the poor dead faces were set with a look of agony, showing well the pain in which the men had died up there in the cold untended ; though few had been left to suffer long once the battle was over, if all accounts are true as to the methods of both Bulgar and Serb when they get at each other in this war. But if the men whom one could recognise as men were bad to look upon, those which were only recognisable as such from their shape were more appalling still, for there were many with faces turned to a hideous black and in many cases these had eyes and other parts torn out by the eagles, who had already begun their ghastly feast. These were revolting to a degree. I have recorded these impressions of what I saw whilst still quite fresh in my memory, since in a war of this magnitude it is only right that all should realise to the full what it is really resulting in in different parts of the world. The battle of Kajmaktealan shows it in a particularly hideous fashion.

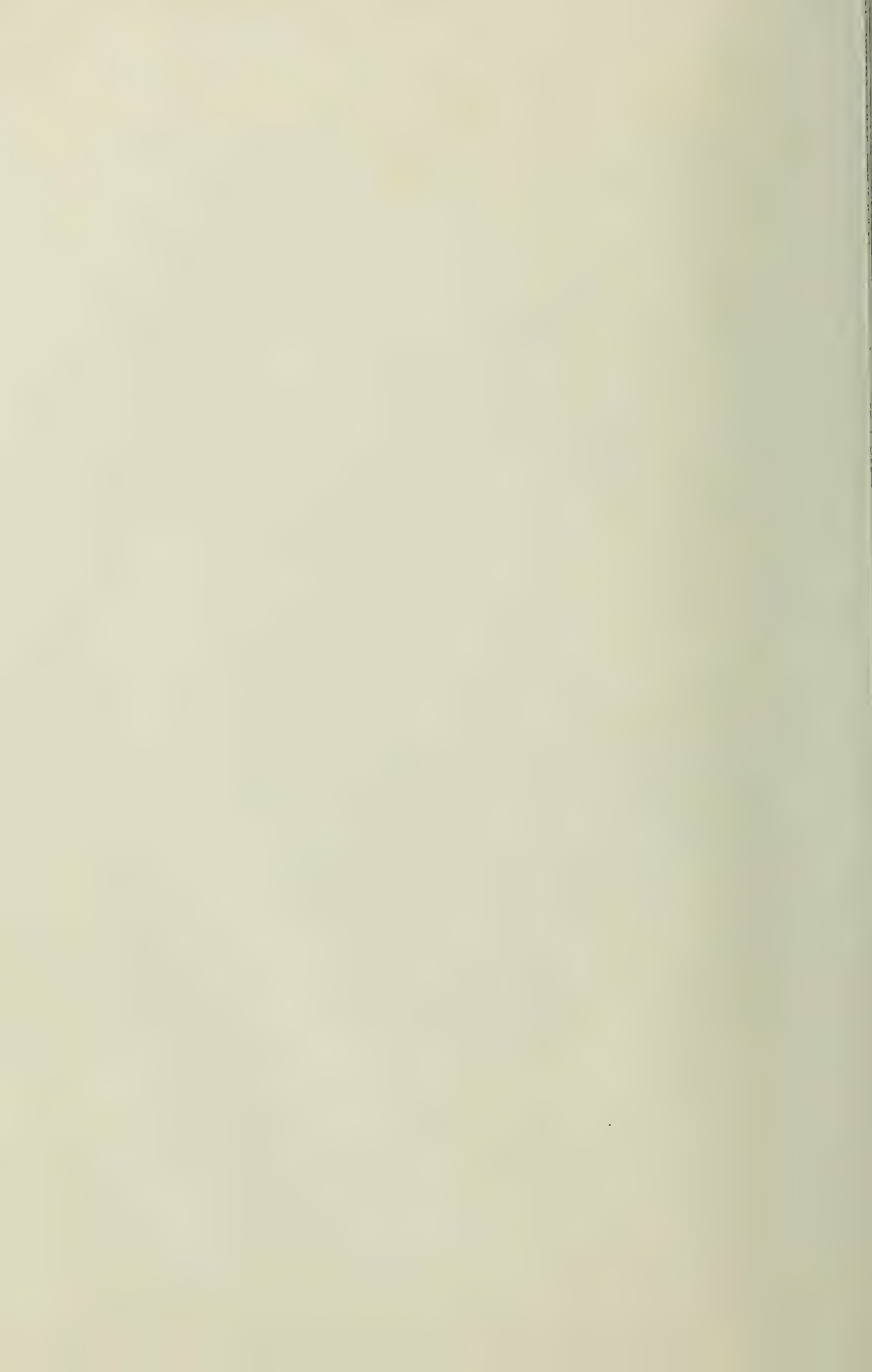
A short distance from these ghastly trenches brought us to the crest of the mountain and a stupendous view burst upon the eyes. The ground falls more or less steeply from the crest, in places being precipitous but nowhere so steep but what an active man could get down. On the three sides range upon range of hills pile up to the horizon, save to the west where over the lower mountains a fine view of the plain is obtained with Monastir in the top N.W. corner. Prilep, due north from us, is in the foothills and could not be distinguished. Monastir is as prettily situated as Florina and is a larger



SERBIAN OFFICERS AND THE AUTHOR ON THE EDGE OF THE CREST OF
KAJMAKTCALAN WITHIN SERBIAN TERRITORY



A SERBIAN ROYAL ENGINEER OFFICER SURVEYING ON THE CREST OF
KAJMAKTCALAN. HE IS LOOKING OUT OVER THE MOUNTAINS OF SERBIA



town. Seen in the clear atmosphere to-day it glittered and gleamed with its numerous white minarets and spires. It must be a fine city. In the plain the long line of dust and smoke showed that Kenali and the rest of that position was still in the hands of Bulgars, and that a heavy bombardment was being maintained. Up here on the crest trenches and gun pits were cut out on the very edge so as to command both upland slopes and downward ones. These were roundish places cut as deep as possible and given a parapet of rough stones as depicted in the photograph. These stretched along the crest and had gun emplacements set further back from which the Bulgars had been shelled when they finally retreated from the mountain top. We met a party of four Serbian officers up here engaged upon a topographical survey of the country. The existing maps (of the Allies) are very inaccurate. The French apparently credit the British with having good maps of the country—but I don't know that we place implicit reliance in our own. Anyway the Serbs have got under weigh quickly, and are making use of the time they are on the Macedonian frontier to get some good maps produced. The frontier runs along close to the crest line, and the 5th Infantry Regiment after the fight erected a stone boundary pillar and inscribed it as follows:—"This pillar was erected by the 5th Infantry Regiment in commemoration of the fact that this gate of our beloved country was captured from the Bulgars by the soldiers of the 5th Infantry on 30th September, 1916." A fine monument to the regiment, and no better will be needed in memory of the brave men they lost that day. It was bitterly cold in the keen wind up at this elevation. One looks right over Albania, Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria

from this point. The lake Ostrovo appears a tiny pond and two other lakes to the west of it are visible. In fact the country below looked like a relief map or globe. Down below us to the north tiny puffs of smoke on the next range to us indicated where the Serb position now was, the Bulgar position being on the ridge beyond. The whole country which lay spread before us was a chaotic mass of mountains, and the communication problem never presented itself in a clearer manner or showed its formidable difficulties in a stronger light. One could see here and there the thin ribbon of a road winding its way along. Along that road all the ammunition and supplies for this part of the front must be carried. Already the Serbs have moved so fast, comparatively speaking when the nature of the country is considered, that the M.T. are having the greatest difficulty in getting up the supplies, and the evacuation of the wounded has become a truly serious matter, since all have to be brought out on mules, in carts, or, as in the case of a wounded officer seen to-day, on stretchers. Twenty to thirty kilometres on a stretcher is a serious matter, or on a mule or in carts, for badly wounded men. How the problem is to be solved in such a country passes comprehension. True we do this kind of thing on the Indian frontier. But there the main bulk of our forces are always Indians who eat rice and our artillery is confined to mountain guns carried on mules, and the cavalry to a squadron or two. In this war such equipment would be useless. Big guns have to be taken along; forage for artillery horses, and some cavalry, and for horses and animals of all kinds employed in the carriage of munitions and supplies. And the men require bread in large amounts and also meat once or twice a week.

Bread is the chief staple of the Serb soldier's food. The colonel told me to-day that the Serb does not consider he has eaten unless he gets bread. Even if he has meat and is not given bread he says he has not eaten! And his daily bread ration is a large one. How they eat this Serb bread I do not know. It is the only thing out there I could not eat. The Serb officers always toast it—great thick slices toasted. They say it is unedible if not toasted.

Having seen our full of the trenches on the crest and the magnificent view, we started back, seeing a different set of trenches and another line full of Bulgar dead. By now we were all frozen with the cold, the wind being colder and stronger than ever, and glad we were to climb on to the ponies and drop down the hillside to a warmer temperature. We met lines of transport going up with ammunition, the men in their great coats looking very weary and cold. Poor devils, life is hard on these Serbs, as also on the French artillerymen up here, though they look happier and take things philosophically. But I pity the lot of those campaigning up at this elevation with winter upon them. We reached the car in far quicker time than it took us to get up, and climbing in dropped down the hill at a pace which might have resulted in disaster. The colonel's mysterious behaviour of the morning over the lunch business, at which he ate nothing, now became clear, for after greeting various men of his regiment on the way down he stopped at the clearing we had halted at on the way up. There he had gone off to talk with some Serb officers, but we had paid no attention to it, being too intent on taking photographs. It was in a beech wood where there were some beautiful young natural woods and regeneration. Two officers

came up, the car stopped and a remark that I had made about the probability of a Serbian beano on the way down was justified, though I had expected it at the dressing station, and as it turned out they had also prepared one of the same kind. The Colonel got out and coming round said :—" Et maintenant, monsieur, nous allons manger un peu." Out we got and were led through a bit of young forest to an arbour constructed of young beech saplings and a small Serb tent on the windy side. In it stood a table, two forms, and two stools, given to us as the guests of honour. The latter had been up at Kajmaktcalan and were riddled with bullets. Four officers were present, and we sat down to a real Serbian dinner at about 4 p.m. My word I was hungry and that was a feast. It began with a glass of cognac, white bread and beautiful Normandy butter, in small tins. Then soup, three large meat courses followed by brains (beautifully cooked) and the inevitable *compote*. Red wine in large amounts and Turkish coffee. The Serbs eat enormously and quickly. There was a red thing called a papaver—a large kind of chili, and a curious salad. It made a pleasant ending, because so typically Serbian, to an eventful day. The conversation was wholly in French, though two of the officers present knew none, and was most interesting. The difficulty was in refusing to eat. The Serbs would take no refusal and one had to tackle each course as it came along.

Night was approaching as we bade our kind hosts farewell, climbed into the car and set off down the mountain side. A glorious sunset bathed the hills in reds and golds which were reflected in the lake below. We were often held up by the masses of transport on its way to the front. Bullock carts in numbers, long blue

French carts, with horse teams, carrying up ammunition for the heavy French batteries, manned by Frenchmen attached to the Serb armies. Mules in hundreds and thousands carrying up ammunition boxes and being ridden or led down again. Donkeys carrying heavy loads. The ubiquitous Ford vans running up ammunition to the advance dumps high up the mountain side. Horse ammunition carts in countless numbers filled with live shells ; four-horse teams drawing artillery caissons also filled with live shells placed in a kind of huge test-tube rack. Officers and soldiers, as individuals or in small parties, on foot or on horseback going up to the front or coming back with dispatches, etc. And saddest of all the wounded being brought down in every conceivable kind of conveyance, the one object being to get them to the hospital. The scene, with the shades of night falling on the great mountain and spreading a pall of darkness over everything, whilst the light of the sunset was still reflected on the mountain tops and down in the lake, will long remain with me as an ineffaceable memory.

Once free of that mountain road we went over the long stretch of deep sand at a fair pace and without coming to grief, which is always to be expected, and were back in camp by 7 p.m., where supper was in full progress. But we felt little like supper.

CHAPTER XV

OUR SERBIAN FRIENDS

SICKNESS was rife amongst all units in Macedonia last summer. Some of us attributed a part of it at least to the dust constantly swirling and eddying in sheets on every road used by the troops throughout the country. It was quite impossible to avoid taking this fine penetrating dust into the system. How it operated there I leave to the decision of medical men. Most of us were only interested in results ! The two prevailing complaints were a nasty form of malaria, resembling in some of its aspects what we used to call jungle malaria in India, and dysentery. And when attacked by the two together the result to the patient was peculiarly distressing and on occasions led to fatal results. The Ostrovo camp had its share of sickness. And with a staff calculated to a nicety for the work in hand, sickness meant extra work for those keeping fit.

Mercifully the doctors kept well. One wondered how they managed it, and at the capacity they exhibited for work. In fact all the men up there, British, Serbian, French, and Russian officers alike, who watched the work of the Ostrovo camp day by day, marvelled how women could face uncongenial surroundings and conditions of life so entirely new for many of them, accompanied by the constant booming of the guns, not to say

the possibility of being bombed at any moment, and yet do their work with the thoroughness characteristic of the unit. Most of the money which provided the equipment of this unit had been subscribed in America, and I can assure the Americans that for every dollar so subscribed, full value was obtained, and many Serbian lives were saved. I feel that I can safely say this without seeming to praise myself. The hospital part of the work was not within my province. As a non-medical man I stood aside and watched with growing admiration the methodical and determined manner in which the unit worked.

And they did not come out of it without loss. The sergeant of orderlies, Olive Smith, succumbed to bad malaria and died on the evening of October 6th, throwing the unit, in their mountain camp, into deep gloom. Everything possible had been done for her, and she had seemed to be picking up, but a relapse supervened and she died; and by her death brought us into even closer touch with the Serbians than we had been before. For nothing could have been finer or more touching than the thoughtfulness and sympathy they showed to the Scottish women in their bereavement. A short service was held in camp early the following morning, and afterwards Dr. Bennett and myself left at 8 a.m. and took her into Salonika. We travelled in one of the Ford ambulances, all we had to spare, Dr. Bennett sitting in front with the driver, the coffin draped with a Red Cross flag being placed on one of the stretchers inside, on which many a wounded Serbian had been brought down from the battlefield. I sat alongside it. That was one of the saddest journeys I have ever made. Death, sharp and sudden, was no new sight to

me. Cholera, plague, fever, and famine soon accustom the Anglo-Indian official to that. But the conditions here were so peculiarly sad and Olive Smith had seemed one of the strongest. We buried her in the Serbian Section of the Allied Cemetery in a grave forming one of a line of Serbian soldiers' graves, fitting spot for one who had given her life for their country. Colonel Sondermeyer provided a Guard of Honour of Serbian soldiers. Three beautiful wreaths with touching inscriptions, one from the 3rd Serbian Army, a second from Colonel Sondermeyer himself, the third from the Serbian Medical Service, were placed by the staff on the coffin. Colonel Sondermeyer, his staff and a number of Serbian officers, all in full-dress uniform, were present at the funeral, and a touching oration was read in English over the coffin by Captain Stephanovitch, a member of the staff, being subsequently repeated in Serbian for the benefit of the Serbian officers and men present.

The sentiments expressed in this oration are so beautiful that I reproduce it here :—

“ Friends,—It is a sad duty which I have to perform to say the last adieu to a generous friend of our people, to say it in the names of all those whom she came to help and for whom she suffered death. Scarcely known to many of us while living, she becomes now and in future glorious through her fate. Though many of us do not remember even the features of her face, we will see now her soul's face in glory and greatness before us. Through unselfish devotedness and pity for our pains and sufferings, she came to us from her great country, she came to soften the hard fate of a small and most unhappy people, stricken by God and by men, and she shared it unto the last, she lost her most precious life

for us, by the same death which every day destroys so many of our lives. She came to help us in our struggle against misery and death, but the same merciless fate, which is not yet satisfied with thousands and thousands of our victims, broke her gentle heart too. Instead to share our glories, to enjoy with us in our triumphs, she shared the sadder part of our great but cruel destiny.

“ At the doors of our country, where’s all what is greater and stronger than everyone of us, all what is immortal in our single lives, all what is spiritual in our earthly existences, all what means soul, what is love and faith, endurance and duty, there are we now proving the last hard lesson ; that only through utmost suffering and death we can pass to our beloved homes, where all our happiness is, where the eternal part of our lives dwells. And so the death of the dear friend, who died for her sympathy and duty, grows to a magnificent symbol before us. In helping the other, in fulfilling her duty, in offering even her life for pity and love, for what is noble and godlike in us, she returns now to the eternal home, to the immortal fatherland. Among those graves, through which we must pass returning to our homes and which for ever will remain most dear to our whole nation, are those of people who died for pure pity and love to us. With our extreme sacrifices, with our many deaths, we Serbians have bought your sympathies. And it is now through deaths such as this one among many others, that our great friends prove their sympathies towards us. And this is, as it ever was, the highest stamp, the strongest bond between men and men, between nations and peoples. So may also this sad death be a noble bond more between our two nations, as it is a high mark of

sympathy and duty showing to us all the right way to eternity.

“May God be gracious to our dear dead’s soul, as she was pitiful to our sufferings.”

The following is a transcript of the inscriptions on the wreaths :—

“In memory of the generous English friend who gave her life for us.—Serbian Army.”

“To the noble martyr of samaritan duty.—Colonel Sondermeyer, D.M.S.”

“For earthly life’s sacrifice eternal life in our souls.—Serbian Medical Service.”

Sorrow draws people closer together than happiness and a closer bond now existed between the Serbians and ourselves. The unit will never forget the exceeding kindness and sympathy of the Serbian officers in that dark hour.

Shortly after our return to the camp it was formally consecrated after the Serbian fashion with a religious ceremony by a Serbian pastor. The Prince Regent, accompanied by his brother Prince George and a brilliant staff who included Admiral Troubridge, honoured the unit by being present. In addition to the unit General Wassitch with his staff, Colonel Sondermeyer, Director of the Serbian Medical Service, and staff, and a number of guests—French and Serbian and British officers—were present. The weather was brilliant, and the consecration service was conducted in front of the mess tent. The priest, with an attendant acolyte with a censer, stood in front of a table covered with a white cloth on which was set a basin of water, a bunch of



THE MOUNTAIN CAMP OF H.R.H. THE CROWN PRINCE OF SERBIA



H.R.H. THE CROWN PRINCE OF SERBIA INSPECTING THE HOSPITAL OF THE S.W.H.
AT OSTROVO CAMP



hyssop, a cross, and a candle. We were drawn up in three sides of a hollow square, the Prince standing in the centre, his staff behind him, table and priest being on the fourth side under the spreading branches of an old and mighty elm tree. The priest commenced by lighting the candle and then read in Serbian the consecration service from the well-thumbed and worn pages of an old and tattered book. At intervals, he took up the hyssop and cross together, dipped them in the water and shook it over those nearest to him and to the four corners of the compass. After the ceremony the Prince Regent made an inspection of the camp, visited most of the wards, and talked to many of the patients, including some Bulgarians. The Serbians appeared to be delighted to see their Prince and talked with him without any show of embarrassment.

At the lunch which followed, the Prince expressed the greatest admiration with all he had seen and at what he was pleased to term the high efficiency of the hospital.

For our part we were greatly taken with the Prince Regent. Quiet and unassuming, one yet felt that he had come with the object of seeing for himself what there was to be seen and to make himself acquainted with the lines upon which the hospital was being run. A total absence of "side" is the way an Englishman would express the demeanour of the Prince to himself. And he believes in the hard life whilst his people are one and all living it. He spends most of his time when not actually at the front in a little camp composed of a few tiny tents away up in the Macedonian mountains not far behind the front. The photograph shows practically all there is to see of this camp. No luxury there and the

surroundings speak for themselves. He is a man this Prince—a man after the Britisher's own heart. And what a life to live though! His people scattered and undergoing God only knows what hardships.

Most of the Serbs we lived amongst up here had not heard of their own people for two years. Knew not whether their wives and families, their mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters were alive or dead. Even if alive, knew not whether they would ever meet again. One of the Serbian ward orderlies, an old man whose fighting days were past, one day found his own son in one of the wards, brought down wounded from the Kajmaktcalan fights. He had not seen him for two years, nor knew that he still lived. And the pride of that father in his son when he had recovered him again! He sat by his bed for hours looking at his face and repeating over and over again to all who would listen to him, whether they understood or no, what a fine lad he was, what a fighter, the best lad and the best fighter ever born, and so forth. It was touching and yet fine to see the two together. And yet for this one reunion, how many thousands are there who will never see their loved ones again, who are destined to pass long years hoping against hope that they may once again meet those who may have been cold in their graves for these two years and more!

Allusion was made in a previous chapter to the visitors who invaded the hospital with eager requests to be shown round. Of these the unit saw a good many. And were proud to see them, even though it meant snatching half-hours from important work in order to show them round.

An ever welcome guest, shall we say because he gave

absolutely no trouble, was General Wassitch, commanding the 3rd Serbian Army. A magnificent man, every inch a soldier, with a broad outlook on things, and speaking some half-dozen languages or more fluently. His headquarters were then at Ostrovo, and he used to come over in the morning, take coffee with the Serbian officers in their mess, walk over to the wards, and stroll round the camp and watch us at work. The soldiers all loved him and faces lit up when he entered a ward, sat casually down on the edge of a bed and began talking, chaffing and laughing with the occupant and his neighbours. All over the world the soldier is the same. He will worship, and always has worshipped through the ages, a commander of this type. But General Wassitch is not only a soldier. He is extraordinarily well informed on all sorts of social matters, and in discussing many British customs and ways of running things he would always appear to be turning them over in his mind as if trying to appreciate their applicability to the future development of Serbia. I happened to have a book of my own newly published, dealing with the forestry question as it applied to Britain, rather a specialised subject it must be admitted. He asked for the loan of it, and happening to look through it after its return I found that he had marked a number of paragraphs and passages the applicability of which could only have been apparent to a man who had studied the social life and economic questions of a great many other countries besides his own.

A few mornings after I had lent him the book I received a message that the General was present in the camp and wished to see me. I proceeded to the Serbian officers' mess. The General was seated at the mess

table with three other officers. I saluted, expecting some official order. "Please be seated" and he motioned me to a chair and coffee was ordered. I understood there was to be a pow-wow on some subject. The subject was forestry, and I had some of the shrewdest questions to answer. The General had regarded certain arguments and their deductions from the point of view of their applicability to Serbia. He was prepared with a brief review of the Serbian forests and their possibilities in the future, and asked for an opinion backed by an invitation to come and make myself fully acquainted with them at the termination of the war. I mention the incident as it explains the broad outlook of the man. And he was so genial. He caught me in a corner one morning painting signboards for the different wards. They were badly wanted, as wounded got carried into the wrong wards, which led to great confusion. The quickest way that morning to get the job done was to do it myself. So I was hard at it. Round the corner of a tent appeared the General. I had then only met him once before. I sprang up and saluted. "Sit down, sit down. So you've now added painting to your other duties." I explained. And he sat down and talked for some time. That was the General. Shortly afterwards his army took Kajmaktealan—a notable feat on that front.

Colonel Sondermeyer and one or more of his staff we of course saw on a number of occasions. He ran up in a car from Salonika, usually stopped the night, inspected our progress, discussed with the C.M.O. any requisites we needed, and they were always there—and departed. Colonel Strathan, British Medical Liaison Officer with the French, who gave us great help, was also a

welcome guest and gave us high praise. These, with, of course, Colonel Milosavlovitch from Ostrovo, were our official inspectors, and we were lucky in them.

But we had hosts of unofficial ones and they were most complimentary to the C.M.O. and her unit. And really the camp looked very workmanlike both externally and within the wards. They praised that, but only partially could they guess at the work which these Scottish women were really putting in. French, Russian, Serbian and British officers—we had them all in turn, and though they endeavoured to hide their polite amazement when they found themselves in the midst of a women's unit hard at work and obviously practical and efficient, they were not at pains to hide their whole-hearted appreciation at all they were shown.

Of a different category of visitor were the young British subalterns and captains of the M.T. They would halt or break down—extraordinary the number of cars, motor bikes, etc., that seemed to go wrong in the close neighbourhood of the camp—and come in to “look up the girls,” as they expressed it. A cheery crowd they were; very efficient and tremendously cheerful, though I won't say that they were always greeted with open arms by the authorities! One evening I remember for the ingenious excuse and propitiatory offering brought by three youngsters. They turned up at supper time and as it happened there was some element of—how shall I put it (not that they would care a jot how it was put)—plausibility in their excuse for coming. Their unit had moved nearer to the Front and they would never be able to join it that night. “And we have brought you a goose,” said one of the youngsters. And he produced the bird. “A wild

goose. I got three. I shot them with a rifle as they were swimming on a lake." I looked at the goose and burst out laughing. If ever I saw a farmyard goose, a bird who had probably never flown twenty yards in its life, here was one before me. He proceeded with his yarn in no way discomfited. His story was amusing. "They were swimming on the lake and we stalked them and shot them. I hit another but it continued swimming some way out." Apparently a car then turned up and a Frenchman seeing the bird jumped out with a gun and blazed away several rounds at it but failed to kill it, the goose still continuing to swim about. The Frenchman got very enraged and thinking he would lose his prey, waded into the water up to his armpits and finally secured the goose. On his return to shore the youngster pointed out that he had hit the bird first and that therefore the trophy belonged to him. But the Frenchman knew nothing of the unwritten code of English sport and got so excited that the much-embarrassed subaltern ("I felt such a fool you know at all this fuss," was the way he put it) waived his claim and the Frenchman went off in high content. However the goose, presented to Miss Jack (who refused to make any further inquiries as to its origin, a practice to which she strictly adhered in this land where all, following the Greek practice, became strangely acquisitive), procured the youngsters a night's lodging.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FRENCH FRONT ON THE MONASTIR PLAIN, OCTOBER 13TH-15TH, 1916

I HAD the good fortune to spend three days on the Monastir Plain at the period of the first assault of the strong Kenali line defending Monastir. The following account of these days is taken almost verbatim from the notes made during the occurrence of the events narrated.

October 13th.—I arrived at Verbeni on the Monastir plain just behind the French front at 5.20 this evening, before nightfall, having ridden the twenty-two miles from Ostrovo across the mountains, *viâ* Gornicevo in just under the three hours.

I had come on a visit to a French colonel quartered here. This visit had been postponed for various reasons. He was at Banitsa when it was first projected but had moved up after the fall of Florina. I chafed at the inevitable delays. I need not have done so, as Dame Fortune still had me under her wing. A date was at length definitely fixed. Owing to a misunderstanding, the horses a friend was lending me had not turned up at the Ostrovo camp in the morning, and I did not get away from Ostrovo till 2.40. I had been told that the journey over the vile mountain road would take five to six hours ; and if the rest was as bad as the part I

knew, I fully expected to take all of that time. However, I was very well mounted, and being a light weight, we trotted gaily along, save on the most break-neck parts of the road, and had a most enjoyable ride, traversing the ground over which the Serbians fought between the beginning of September and end of the month.

We had witnessed from our camp all the chief battles fought during the present advance, but I had not yet seen one from close up. From something my friend had told me before I left Ostrovo to-day, there seemed every probability that I was to have this wish gratified now; but to what extent I did not dream when I arrived.

Verbeni is situated to N.E. of Florina and a few miles south of Kenali. The village consists of mud-walled houses with tiled roofs, many of them smashed by shell fire. The village itself is embosomed in trees and is picturesquely placed in the centre of "the Plain," as the Monastir plateau is called. This plain commences below Banitsa, situated in the foot-hills to the south-east. To the south the hills hem in the plain. The Salonika-Monastir railway, as has been said, after leaving Ostrovo, runs up the western edge of the lake of that name and shortly afterwards reaches Ekshisu; it then turns north and runs to near Banitsa, where it turns west to Florina and then north again to Monastir, situated in the north-west corner of the plain. North of Monastir the hills rise up again, the plain, some eight miles across in its broadest part, being also hemmed in by mountains to east and west; its length is about twenty-five to thirty miles. Prilep, to N.E. of Monastir, is in the foot-hills, although there is a small piece of plateau near this town. Florina is about one-third of the way up the

plain from its southern end, also situated on the western edge, a part of the town being on a low hill. It is a most beautiful little town and not very seriously damaged by shell fire.

Verbeni presented a wonderful sight under the rays of the setting sun this evening. The village and surrounding fields were packed with troops, horses, mules, donkeys, parked artillery caissons, ammunition and supply carts, and so on. The animals were picketted and engaged on their evening meal. The men were either eating theirs or standing or sitting about gossiping and smoking. Some in great coats with packs on were getting ready for departure and were standing about near the piled arms. For these were reserves, and were moving up nearer to the front to-night in readiness for to-morrow, the great day. The scene formed a real war picture. One had been living amongst Serbs, and though there were Serbs here—this is the French front—the soldiery were French *poilus* and French artillerymen in the main, enjoying their leisure. As the sun dropped behind the mountains to the west those to the east turned a bright crimson, and the dust, rising in clouds from the main road close by, full of passing troops, took on a pale crimson hue in which trees, men and beasts loomed weird and fantastic. The camp fires began to burn up a brilliant red. As I watched the ever-changing scene the dusk deepened and darkness fell. Men and animals faded into blurred masses or stood out as black silhouettes as they passed across the fires, now dotting all the near foreground of the landscape. It was still quite warm down here in the plain and I stood for a long time watching the scene and listening to the chattering of the French *poilus*, gay and

light hearted, though many of them will be in the fight to-morrow—for there is to be a fight, and a big one.

Before dinner I went into the colonel's tent and found the two colonels seated at a tiny camp table in a corner of the large bare tent, which contained only this table, two stools, a camp cot and the colonel's modest kit—a second camp cot was subsequently placed in an opposite corner for me. The floor was bare earth. The reports of the day were being examined. The artillery fire so close ahead of us is very heavy and I was informed that a great bombardment had been carried out all day preparatory to a strong infantry attack to-morrow on the Bulgarian lines defending Monastir. This was good news.

But I must hark back a little. My friend the colonel had greeted me warmly on my arrival and congratulated me on my luck in arriving at such an opportune moment, as I had come just in time to see "something interesting"; as he put it. He expressed surprise at my having come across the mountain road in so short a time, but admitted that he himself had only made the journey in a motor car. It's my belief that in a few years' time we'll be forgetting how to ride or how to estimate distances when off a grand trunk road liberally adorned with mile-posts. My friend and the other colonel, a senior officer who had arrived on inspection duty, both expressed their inability to give a reliable estimate of the distance between their present position and Ostrovo, the maps being admittedly inaccurate and neither of them having done the journey in any other manner than in a car with the inevitable stoppages, break-downs, cooling, oiling, etc., peculiar to running on the Macedonian mountain tracks, than which it would be difficult to find worse in the world. On a



GORNICEVO VILLAGE FROM THE WEST. SERBIAN GRAVES IN THE FOREGROUND



THE WESTERN END OF BANITSA VILLAGE SOMEWHAT DAMAGED BY GUNFIRE.
THE MONASTIR PLAIN IS SEEN BEYOND

horse the journey from Ostrovo to Verbeni *viâ* Gornicevo proved most interesting. After leaving Gornicevo the road is of the up-and-down order, and slightly better in surface for the eight kilometres to Banitsa. The mountain sides are bare, mostly stony or rocky, and exhibit the usual type of shallow trench and gun emplacements varied by the grouse-butt erections. The cover the troops could obtain up here when advancing was of the meagrest. I had been living within sound of the guns for many weeks, so it was not new. But as we approached Banitsa and neared the plain, the thunder of artillery away to the north increased in volume, and it began to become obvious that something big was in preparation over there. Banitsa is a pretty village, but little damaged by shell fire. It lies tucked away in a fold in the hills, the houses scattered in an irregular elongate manner with lines and clumps of poplars (see figure facing p. 60). Seen against the hill at the back with the bright glow of the afternoon light upon it, it had a most picturesque appearance. The houses are built of stone with tile roofs, as is usual in these mountains. Dropping down on the northern side of the village, we obtained fine views of the Monastir Plain, up which the French advanced. A captive sausage balloon hung in the clear atmosphere—over Verbeni, the orderly said. On leaving Banitsa the road drops sharply, a track of the roughest cobble-stones. On reaching the plain we swung to the north and till about level with Florina, which was away on our left, we pushed on rapidly. A parallel road to the west of us looked exactly like Piccadilly; I mean so far as its traffic went—endless lines of vehicles of all description smothered in clouds of dust. After leaving Florina

behind us we struck a convoy of Ford vans loaded with ammunition, halted and engaged in repairs. Shortly after we were picked up by a convoy of heavy French lorries, and from thence onwards we rode in sheets of dust. Whenever possible I got off the road, which was cut to pieces by the traffic, and rode in the fields alongside—but the going was not much better here as the surface was cut up by artillery wheels and at intervals artillery caissons were parked in great camps. In fact on one side or the other there were camps of this nature all the way, increasing in density as we approached Verbeni. We were soon as white with dust as millers—and parched to the lips. At a narrow bridge with a steep drop to it we got into a bad jam, and some artillery horses becoming restive we had a lively five minutes of it as none of us could move an inch except those horses. We got over the bridge in a solid mass and how it took the weight of us I shall never know. On the other side, being near the outside, I turned my beast's head and putting him at the deep ditch we got into the field, but not out of the dust. I was constantly forced back on to the road, however, by the lines of old trenches which ran right across country at right angles to, and on both sides of, the road—Bulgarian trenches taken by the French in their advance and reversed. Finally I gave up the fields and resigned myself to the transport and dust on the road. A lot of guns were going up to the front. One battery had a fine specimen of an old French colonel, with grey moustache and imperial, blue grey tunic, blue breeches with a broad red stripe and black top boots, riding at their head. His grim set features relaxed into a smile as I came up to him and he returned my salute in an old-fashioned courtly manner as I passed

him. His face was as grey as his moustache with dust. It required patience and some skilful steering to get through the press of animals and men as we neared Verbeni. Asking our way, we were told that the house we sought was the last in the village on the left hand. What a sight that village was! Shall I ever see the like again? The houses, many of them smashed to bits by shell fire, others alongside apparently untouched, and the street packed with men and transport of every conceivable kind, some still on the move and others camped for the time being. The animals at their evening meal, the men lolling about smoking and gossiping and quite oblivious to the deafening thunder of the guns now scarce two miles ahead. At length we reached the end of that apparently interminable street, were directed down a narrow alley, and came out into a little courtyard at one side of which stood a double-storied house of fair size and apparently well built. At a first glance it appeared to be untouched, but on subsequent acquaintance I found it had a great shell hole through the tiled roof. Dismounting I went inside and opening a door out of the small hall found several Serbian officers in a room used apparently as an office, living-, and bed-room combined. I was told the French colonel was upstairs. These stairs were of wood and of the roughest construction; the ceilings and walls of lath and plaster, and full of holes. Bundles of maize cobs hung from the rafters. Upstairs I found a French colonel, and another French officer in bed, down with fever. The colonel was seated at a rough wooden table covered with white American oilcloth. Two camp chairs, two short wooden forms, and a couple of camp cots formed the furniture of this headquarters

of the French colonel and his staff. The senior officer turned out to be also a visitor, and he took me down to my friend, who was in a tent pitched in the stable yard at the back of the house. The latter, who speaks excellent English, knocked off the work he was engaged upon and at once ordered tea for me. And it was very welcome. Tea over, leaving the two colonels, who were deep in code messages and studying plans for to-morrow, I went outside, as already detailed, to look about me for first impressions before it got dark. The junior colonel gave us an excellent, typically French, dinner with a *menu*—fancy a *menu* at the Front! It was written on a dirty, dog-eared half-sheet of notepaper, and badly written at that—but it was a *menu*, and I have it now as a cherished memento. This was, I fancy, the soldier chef Albert's own effort and came about in this way. The two colonels were poring over a large scale-map in the tent by the light of a single dip; I, with an end of candle stuck on the bottom of my cot, was writing up my notes. Dinner was announced. *En route* to the house (it was served in the room already described) we passed the kitchen. A mud-built erection with holes in it for the cooking pots, built up against the wall of the house formed the stove, a small table and tiny tent for Albert provided the rest of the kit. "Albert," called the senior colonel. "Mon Colonel." "What is there for dinner?" Albert detailed his bill of fare with gusto. "Bon, bon, Albert," said the colonel. My mouth watered and the good Albert sat him down and wrote out that menu, I feel sure, in honour of his two appreciative guests. To me, after a course of Serbian rations, that dinner was the finest feast I had had for many a week. I do not want to decry the Serbian

rations, but they are *not* French cooking. Nor is the British for that matter. The only thing I missed was *café noir*. You might have safely betted you would have ended dinner with it. But you would have lost. The colonels drank tea as they said coffee kept them awake ! The cognac was, however, very good. The conversation, of these two war-worn men was most interesting. I learnt a great deal about positions and the French ideas about the progress on the various fronts. They appeared to be fairly confident that matters were going on all right on this one, and that the great attack to take place at mid-day to-morrow would be successful if, as they put it, "the Bulgars don't get on the run before." But it was admitted that the Kenali line was very strong. The junior colonel had seen many years' service in French Indo-China and the East ; with my own Indian experience we had, therefore, much in common. As we were smoking after dinner two staff officers came in with dispatches—a French, apparently artillery, and a Serbian. Both were big men—above the average in height and breadth, and both very spruce. The Serbian very polite and speaking French fluently. He read out the details of a programme which had been drawn up for one of the attacks on October 1st last. The colonels smiled as they heard some of the instructions, for several of the positions had apparently been taken in exactly the opposite manner to that prescribed. The Serbian then left, standing stiffly at attention, clicking his heels together and saluting in a manner he must have learnt in Germany or Austria. The French officer was taking the dispositions for the morrow from the senior colonel ; my friend outside lighting the Serbian down the stairs with a candle-end stuck in a bottle,

when a loud detonation sounded without. "An avion bomb" said the old colonel with a shrug. The junior colonel re-entered smiling, and said, "A bomb and I with a lighted candle at a window." The French staff officer sprang to shut the wooden shutters in the room we were in. "A quoi bon faire" said the old colonel, leaning back in his chair and pointing upwards. "They've seen our lights through there ages ago." "Through there," was the big hole in the tiled roof overhead, through which a dark patch of sky could be seen. More bombs followed but none so near us as the first. They were trying to get the reserves and ammunition, with both of which they well knew Verbeni must be packed. I had never been bombed before and in trying to analyse my feelings, I think one of curiosity was the uppermost. As for the other men, they were too used to this kind of thing to be affected one way or the other. It was only a passing incident to them and not of particular importance. We returned to the tent soon afterwards. The bombardment is now (10 p.m.) very violent. To the north, south-west, and south-east, the flashes and flickerings are almost continuous and the detonations sound so near that the guns might be firing immediately outside of our tent. I went and inspected the nags before turning in. They are picketted just across the stable-yard opposite our tent door in company with two of the colonel's—all four in a nice deep bed of litter in which three were lying down, snoring loudly. The fourth appears to prefer sleeping on his feet.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST ASSAULT OF THE KENALI LINES, OCTOBER 14TH, 1916

I HAVE had my wish to-day and seen a modern battle in all its phases, and the following account of the big push by the French to take the Brod-Kenali-Medjidli line was written down on Hill 629, from which General Sarrail and his staff conducted the battle. The knoll is just to the west of Sakulevo village. I left Verbeni soon after dawn, the two French colonels proceeding to the Serbian front. They advised me to go to the French front in the plain, as I should see more. As they went off in their car the senior colonel said to me, "Don't stop in Sakulevo village or you may get a marmite (Anglice = coal box) on your head." The colonels were very disappointed at not being able to witness the French attack, which it was thought would be certain of success ; for in the mountains where they were going the mist would probably prevent their seeing much. The bombardment had been very heavy throughout the night and had increased in intensity if possible this morning. As I climbed into the saddle I confess to some secret qualms as I knew we were to be under shell fire. Accompanied by a mounted orderly I rode due north to Sakulevo, about two and a half kilometres away and towards the

increasing din of the bombardment. My directions were simple. Ride down road to village, cross a small bridge to left after passing through village, and climb up the south side of Hill 629, and there you are. *En route* we passed a stream of laden ambulances going to the dressing stations, and empty artillery caissons returning for ammunition and full ones going in our direction, besides stray horsemen on their way to the Front. Hill 629 is to be the position of the general staff for the day, and they hope to break through the very strong position of the Bulgars on the Kenali line. This line is said to have been chosen by General Mackensen himself and they have been eleven months building it; it is on the plan and scale of those in France, and quite unlike the shallow trenches seen on the mountains and in the plain up to this place.

So this is to be a real big push. The orders were that the bombardment should be kept up with increasing intensity, and that between eleven and twelve noon every gun should blaze away to its utmost; at twelve noon the infantry attack will commence. The strength of the French here is, I understand, two divisions or thereabouts, including both the colonial regiments we saw pass the camp at Ostrovo a week or two ago, supported by a brigade of Russians. The Serbians are in the hills to east. The plain here is somewhere about six to eight miles across. With the colonel's warning in my memory I did not waste time in the village of Saku-levo, crammed as it was with reserves and transport; nor did I leave the horses there although there were plenty of trees in the village and outskirts (just the place to be shelled, and it was later on). The narrow road to the bridge was choked with horse transport, in which

we got involved and had some difficulty in extricating ourselves—every one was in a hurry as the spot was very unhealthy. Getting clear of the mass and seeing an opening I made a dash at the bridge, and just got over before a heavy artillery caisson, and proceeded up the road which ascends gradually the south slope of the small hill—an isolated one in the plain. A few hundred yards up this slope I came upon a number of motor cars parked and a line of saddle horses held by soldier grooms. It looked exactly like a racecourse or better a Hunt Race Meet at home. I smiled as the extraordinary resemblance struck me, Up above, just below the crest, where the hill took a sharp bend to south-west, were a number of figures—General Sarraill and his staff. With the contradictory opinions of the two colonels in my mind (one had suggested that I should go and introduce myself to the British officer attached to the staff and ask to be allowed to watch the battle, the other telling me not to as I might be refused and escorted off the scene altogether), I determined to keep a little to the east of the staff's position which commanded the plain to north, east, and west, and therefore the whole battlefield. Dismounting, I directed the orderly to take up his position with the rest of the horses, and transferring my knapsack, loaded with a good lunch and other paraphernalia, from the nags to my own person, I slowly climbed the short space, covered with green turf and quite open, save for a small low clump or two of brambles, to the crest. The din of the guns here was terrific, and as I neared the crest I won't say I felt quite at ease. I took up a position about fifty yards distant from the staff, and of course in plain view of them and on the same level. Depositing my baggage I lay down at a little

distance from the north slope and surveyed the scene. In front below was a strip of plough rising to a low crest line over which the plain beyond appeared. Plough and plain were a mass of trenches plainly visible to the naked eye. Slightly to the right front, four or five miles out in the plain, two white minarets and houses gleaming white amongst the trees showed the position of Kenali, a small town. At this stage, though being heavily shelled, fires had not started to any extent and the town was plainly visible, as was Medjidli, a village to the left front. I had remained in my position for some time when I heard a moaning, whizzing sound coming straight towards me. Before I had fully realised what it was a shower of mud and a great mass of black and brown smoke, for all the world like a giant mushroom, shot up in the strip of plough below, and shortly after the sound of a loud explosion. It was a marmite. I didn't feel at all comfortable and less so when a second followed and burst still nearer, a large circular black crater appearing at the place of impact of the shells. Five more of these shells followed, the direction perfect and only requiring a very little more elevation to land beautifully on our hill and amongst the general staff. They had a funk hole, I had noted, and I was quite prepared to make for it if necessary. To quiet my nerves, I started making a sketch of the position in front of me. Our batteries were firing from just below us and on both sides, and by 9.30 Kenali was almost hidden in a pall of smoke and the trenches out in the plain were ribbons of white smoke. Now at 11.30 the whole of the Kenali direction is a uniform dull grey mass of smoke and dust from the intense bombardment. The curious whizz, whirr and scream of the shells, to unaccustomed



A BATTERY OF BIG FRENCH GUNS ON THE WAY UP TO COMMENCE THEIR
ASSAULT ON THE KINALI LINE IN THE MONASTIR PLAIN



A LIMBER OF A BIG FRENCH BATTERY

ears, is both deafening and disconcerting, and at first it was difficult to make out whether they were coming towards one or going away—but it did not take many hours to get *au fait* in this matter. It was the big howitzer batteries, and the biggest the French had here, I believe, which were drawing the Bulgar fire on us, and perhaps also their knowledge of the country, which led them to suspect where the G.H.Q. would be. So far as the artillery preparation goes the battle is now at its most interesting stage. Apparently our big guns have silenced those of the Bulgars, for they are no longer firing in this direction. Our big ones are pumping shells into Kenali and others are shelling the trenches. I have moved further forward so that I can now see the whole of the line from the mountains to east to those on the west, and am in an excellent position to see the infantry attack. A big battery to our right front has now opened or I have just discovered it. Owing to the great noise it is not easy to spot all our batteries, and the Bulgars are replying for all they are worth and do not appear to be silenced yet. They are firing shrapnel on our trenches on right front. I am now beginning to pick up the different sounds of the shells, and shrapnel once heard overhead is not likely to be forgotten. Our own big batteries below are fine. You hear their shells go booming over the ridge and can follow them right into Kenali, where they explode in a cloud of smoke and a few seconds later the sound of the explosion comes back. The trenches in the ploughed field in front are full of reserves, and through the glasses the men can be seen sitting or standing on the parapets—Frenchmen in the blue French kit. It is now seven minutes to twelve by my watch and the great moment of the day

is approaching. The smoke from bursting shells and gas—for I was told they were going to use gas—and dust has blotted out all the horizon beyond the ridge of the plough and the first line of Bulgar trenches which can be occasionally seen, but a part of the big range of mountains to N.N.W. and N.W., which had been hidden, is now coming into view again. Bombardment is now at its height and I have a beastly headache.

The infantry attack started at 12.5 by my watch, and this is what I saw. There is a haze over the mountains but here in the plain it is a beautiful sunny day. Over the crest in front of us a strip of level country is visible with a few solitary elm trees standing here and there as seen in hedges at home in England. Not far beyond the crest a dark line runs across this strip of level, being lost for a bit to the east where the crest rises to hide it, but stretching on west right up to the foot of the mountains and of course up into them, though unseen from here. Above this line hang masses of black, brown and light-coloured smoke; white puffs of smoke—shrapnel shell—burst above it, and here and there a great mushroom cloud of dense smoke betokens the bursting howitzer shells. The dark line is the first line of Bulgarian trenches. Soon after 12.5 the smoke cleared to some extent from the portion of this line to north, and by 12.25 the line could be seen to be the centre of a fierce struggle between the infantry. To the west and about Medjidli, the first line of trenches are still enshrouded in smoke and nothing can be made out there. Kenali is hidden in a dense pall of smoke into which shell after shell is being thrown by the big batteries immediately below us and the batteries to our right front. To the north the second line of Bulgar trenches are a mass of smoke

and bursting shells, and a barrage is evidently being formed there to prevent reserves being sent up to the first line. In front of the first line men are dropping like the leaves of a forest in autumn, and the attackers are evidently not having it all their own way. Bursts of rifle fire, the tat-tat of machine guns, trench mortars and bombs, all are hard at it, and the noise is unceasing and deafening. A desperate struggle is evidently taking place at Kenali now at 12.35. An aeroplane has been circling overhead all the morning and a captive sausage balloon swings in the clear atmosphere directly behind the general staff.

An aeroplane has just come in from front and comes circling down ; when a few hundred feet only above us a round flat white package with a long streamer attached, acting like a kite's tail, is dropped. A dispatch from the Front ! An orderly runs up, picks it up as it reaches the ground and makes it over to a rapidly approaching staff officer. In this novel and unromantic fashion nowadays do dispatches from the Front and beyond the Front reach the general in command, instead of at the hands of a smart galloping A.D.C. in full uniform and all the panoply and romance of war. I am glad to remember that I had ridden to my first view of a battle-field in action in the old-fashioned way on a horse in the manner of our forefathers. My momentary nervousness of earlier in the day has quite departed, and I now like to hear the shells booming over the countryside and to watch the big batteries below at work. To this music I enjoyed an excellent luncheon provided by the very excellent Albert.

As I have said, the three main objectives to-day are Kenali due north of Sakulevo, Medjidli due west of

Kenali, and Brod due east of the latter. Brod is the Serbian objective, the other two those of the French attack. Neither of the latter have yet been taken, as Kenali is still the scene of turmoil, whilst our shells are sending up clouds of smoke and dust in front of Medjidli at 2.5 p.m. Two Nieuport aeroplanes (so like gigantic hornets) have passed overhead, flying over the battle area. The guns are now having the game to themselves. Kenali is being heavily shelled and is on fire in several places. The big batteries are confining their attention to this place. The town stands in a long grove of trees and is evidently suffering heavily. To west isolated farms and the houses in Medjidli are also burning. To north the second line of trenches is being heavily shelled by our batteries to west of us, and the first line trenches due north appear to be being shelled by Bulgarians, which would look as if we had made some progress here. The amount of ammunition we have used in the last thirty-six hours must be enormous, and with our poor line of communications this is likely to prove serious if we don't break through. Anyway the Bulgarians are evidently putting up a stronger resistance than was looked for.

I will describe the battlefield as I now know it, for it is an ideally situated one from the spectacular point of view and also from that of the General conducting operations. The plain, as I have said, varies between six to eight miles across, running up into the mountains to east and west. Just to N.W. of Sakulevo is a small rounded hill rising out of the plain. This is occupied by the staff (and myself). Half a dozen telephone wires, laid flat on the ground, run from divisional headquarters up the hill and disappear into a dug-out immediately

behind the spot occupied by the general staff. From its northern edge the hill drops rather sharply to a little stream, on the other side of which are a couple of fields bounded by the strip of plough-land running east and west which rises to the aforementioned low crest we see in front of us. The strip of ploughed land ascends to the east (on our right front), and on its southern side here forms a bluff dropping almost sheer some twenty to thirty feet into a narrow ravine. This ravine is the bed of a beautiful little stream, the Brod, which, flowing from the east, wanders round the foot of the bluff, then turns and runs off due south. Beyond the bluff to N.E. and E. the Kenali plain stretches away to the foot of the mountains (the famous Kajmakcalan and the Moglena range). The stream, chiefly on the southern bank, is fringed with willow copses which in places are fifty yards or so broad, and hidden in them are many of our batteries. It is these batteries which got such a gruelling this morning, the Bulgarians having the exact range of the copses, and putting in shell after shell during a whole half-hour until finally stopped by our heavies, who switched off Kenali and on to them till they ceased firing; but not before the Bulgar batteries had put some of the French guns out of action. Over the ridge in front of us due north stretches the level plain, cultivated and with elm trees scattered here and there. Kenali is in this plain about four or five miles away, slightly east of north, embosomed in trees. To west and east in front of Kenali run the first and second line trenches of the Bulgarians, with others behind them. The position at Kenali is obviously a very strong one and, from what one has seen, well furnished with machine guns, etc. The trenches run through Medjidli on the west, and on to the

mountains on that side, and from Kenali run east across the plain and up to Brod in the outer hills of the mountain ranges. From our hill the whole of the position is visible in the form of a panoramic view. A better ground for a modern battlefield, from the point of view of seeing what is going on, could not be imagined.

A French aeroplane has just circled gracefully down to us and come to earth. The observer climbed out and went hurriedly up to the general staff with a verbal report. As hurriedly he left. There is a long narrow strip of turf looking like the fairway up to a golf green, just at bottom of the south side of our knoll, and at the lower end of this the aeroplane came down. As soon as the observer got out the plane moved slowly up the grass strip, for all the world like a great locust walking clumsily with wings outstretched (if a locust ever did this), turned round near the top, and waited for the observer to rejoin her. As soon as he had resumed his seat the aeroplane ran clumsily down the green slope, rose gracefully into the air, soared upwards in a few spirals and made for the Front again.

3.25 p.m.—Kenali still burning in several places and I noticed an hour ago that one of the minarets has lost its upper half, shot off by a shell. Medjidli is also burning in several places. The battlefield is now quite clear with only a slight haze, and everything can be plainly seen. The trenches to north are being shelled intermittently, first line by Bulgars, second line by us, I think. Kenali still being heavily shelled by many of our batteries, and also trenches to east of this town, so that not much progress has been made there apparently. It is a glorious afternoon—an autumnal afternoon in a mountainous region. Practically no wind, only a faint



• GENERAL SARRAIL AND STAFF WATCHING THE ATTACK ON THE KINALI LINE, OCTOBER 14TH, 1916. THE FRAMULE
BUSHES IN FRONT SCREEN THE ENTRANCE TO THE TELEPHONE DUG OUT

air. A light haze rests on the mountains giving them a beautiful colouring of soft lights and shades. The level plain country outside the battle area lies bathed in a golden glow of sunlight; the little Brod reflects the soft blue of a lovely autumn sky. The air is like champagne. It does seem awful—it is awful, that this beautiful scene should be given over to carnage by man himself, and that man should be at death grips out there in the plain, be blown into fragments by shells pitching so close to our own position, or be lying wounded and in agony in the midst of a hell of his own making all round us in such a beautiful setting. The stream down there, the little Brod, to a fisherman, is more suggestive of a trout rod and a lazy day after trout than to have its banks the lurking place of great guns dealing out death and destruction.

It is now 3.35 p.m. and the visible conditions on the battlefield very good. From one end of the trenches to the other hang columns and clouds of grey, blue, brown and black smoke at frequent intervals, the trench lines being distinctly visible. There appears to be a lull in the attack. The big batteries below us are silent and some of the guns are wrapped up in their covers. Has Kenali fallen?

3.45 p.m.—The big batteries below have ceased firing and are being covered up in their casings, save the gun on outside left which ceased firing early this morning and appears to have been hit. It is difficult to say what is going on round Kenali. All our batteries down by the river are hard at it, as also those to the west near the foot of the mountains. The river batteries are shelling the trenches to east of Kenali, firing diagonally. The shells can be followed the whole way, their dull hum and

whirr, decreasing in volume, coming back to us for several seconds, and then the explosion a second or so later. The diagonal firing of these batteries makes them less ear-splitting now for us up here. Those trenches are evidently not yet taken. These batteries are making beautiful shooting. I have now located the area where the shells are bursting. They emit a black cloud of smoke on exploding and are bursting on the area of plain to east and slightly in front of Kenali. The line of trenches is almost invisible on the uniform surface of the arable land. The shells are bursting close together on the line and are searching it very thoroughly and methodically. The Bulgarians must be having a thin time of it there, unless the trenches are very deep and strongly constructed. This line must be four or five miles or so from our position.

4.15 p.m.—Several of the guns of the big batteries below us restarted firing soon after four o'clock, and they are shelling Kenali again. The shelling of trenches to east and of those to extreme west and up to Medjidli continues, but the rest of the area is quiet, smoking farm homesteads and scattered columns of smoke from trench lines being the only evidences of the fierce struggle in these parts which took place earlier in the day—in the soft sunlight of this fine afternoon they present a sad appearance in what is otherwise a peaceful scene on this part of the line. All the big guns below us are now in action again, save the disabled one, pumping in shells into Kenali. All the river batteries are shelling the trenches to east, so that it is evident that Kenali, Medjidli and trenches to west of latter have not yet been taken. There remains only the strip of trenches to north of us, of which the first line appears

to have been taken, since they are under Bulgarian fire, and perhaps a little piece of trench directly to east of and in front of Kenali. There is so much smoke here, however, that I am uncertain about this.

I left my position after writing the above, skirted round the south base of the hill and climbed up again to west of the general staff's vantage point, as I wanted to take a photograph or two. I passed the underground telephone exchange, a shell-proof dug-out. As I snapped it I heard a bell ring out sharply inside and a junior French staff officer ran up and disappeared into the interior. I then strolled round to the west and watched the batteries on this side at work. No advance has apparently been made here. They are busily engaged shelling the Bulgarians' first-line trenches. General Sarrail was seated with two or three officers in a little recess cut out in the face of the hill just below the crest. The rest of the staff—there must have been some thirty of them—were standing about in groups conversing or scanning the battlefield through glasses and telescopes. The one or two Frenchmen I talked with, though very grave, were extremely pleasant. General Sarrail was evidently on the point of departure. I picked up the horses somewhere about five o'clock; for the show, so far as any direct further attack for that day went, was evidently over. The ride home in the rays of the lengthening sun was made in thick swirls of dust, blood-red under the sunset's tints, rising from the mass of transport with which the road was choked. Sakulevo was crammed with men, horses, mules, donkeys and carts of all descriptions, and here and there under the trees on either side of the road were parties of wounded, many bearing terrible wounds, brought back from that

inferno. Amongst them the blacks of the French colonial regiments were plentiful, their wounds often frightful, only roughly bandaged as they were ; but the faces of these men were absolutely expressionless and most of them were smoking—all those who had the strength to hold a cigarette or pipe between their teeth. I dismounted and looked at a number of these poor fellows, and did what could be done to ease them. They were on their way to the field dressing stations, of which there are two between this village and Verbeni. I washed out the dust with a cup of tea on arrival at Verbeni, and then watched the stream of ammunition caissons and carts which were being rushed up to the Front. There is a wonderful sunset, but all the country to the north is wrapped in misty smoke and the thunder of the guns is incessant. The colonels turned up just before dark, having seen very little of the Serbian show in the mountains. The latter had made some progress, but had not taken Brod, so the three objectives have failed. The tall Frenchman of the previous night arrived, and in the tent by the light of a single candle he gave a graphic description of what had taken place on the French front. He was in a towering passion. The guns he said were insufficient and the wire entanglements had remained unbroken. No progress had been made on the west. Neither Medjidli nor Kenali had been taken, and the only progress made was a bit of first-line trench taken between Medjidli and Kenali and a short bit to east of Kenali, very much what I had estimated. The trenches and dug-outs, he said, were very deep and strongly built; they had masses of machine guns and the wire entanglements had not been smashed up. He was straight from the fight and naturally very

full of it. He was interested in the account I gave of what I had seen, but thought I was too optimistic in my opinions of the advance made. And of course he turned out to be correct. Both trenches, dugouts and wire would take some smashing, he said, and he did not think they had sufficient guns to do it with. In fact, the consensus of opinion of these three experts was that it had been a very poor day. The Bulgarians are putting up a much stiffer fight than was anticipated in their fortified line. There were no two opinions, however, on the subject of the French infantry. They had attacked in the most magnificent fashion and fought like tigers. The colonial regiments had come in for a lot of the fierce fighting, and one of their companies had been cut to pieces, a part of it, as the Frenchmen put it, "are still hanging on the wire entanglements." He told us that the Russians had now been ordered to take up the attack, which was to be continued, and there is to be a thorough preparation by the artillery to-night before the Russian infantry make their attempt. General Sarrail and staff had returned to their headquarters in Florina and would be on the hill again early to-morrow, when they hope to break through. The French officer said that throughout the day they were momentarily expecting the Bulgarians' big shells to find out the staff, and so the funk-hole on the hill might have been easily wanted. A quarter of a mile further would have done it, and they got a shell or two into Sakulevo as I left it—and had more in later. That was my baptism of shell fire, and I congratulated myself to-night on my luck. Kenali from all accounts now appears to be a very strong fortress. It got a gruelling to-day, but not a corner of it was taken. I stopped writing this when I heard a

voice say, "Is the English officer here?" I was in the tent. We messed in the house. "Yes," I replied. He gave the welcome information that dinner was served. I was famishing. As I anticipated, dinner to-night was not a gay one. The colonels were depressed, but I raised a smile when I described how the appearance of the hill on my arrival that morning had suggested to me an English racecourse. They expressed surprise at my enthusiasm, for they had seen so much of this sort of thing. "Put yourself in the place of a man who has not and wanted to, and you will understand," I returned. We discussed many topics, especially life after the war. They were pessimistic on this subject, pointing out that France would have a hard time in front of her, as her wealthy parts were being exploited by Germany. After dinner I went out, the road close by with its endless stream of transport possessing a great fascination. I watched the moonlight playing on the little river, the Brod, just across the road, and the lines of horse transport moving darkly across its silvery brilliance. A regular war picture this made, such as one sees portrayed occasionally. In discussing trenches one of the colonels told me that while he was in France a single French Army used up 30,000 trees in a day, not parts of trees but whole trunks including branches. Mostly to go underground, as he put it, and be wasted for ever. He wondered where it all came from. He said that they are now felling extensively in the French forests, which I well knew.

9.30 p.m. The bombardment has been at its intensest again, and now a counter-attack by the Bulgarians, so the colonel said, is taking place. The sky to north is lit up with red, green and white star shells, and the whole

horizon is a dull red glow. Pandemonium rages once more over there. What a hell modern war is! These few smiling fields and mountain slopes now given over to the worst form of barbarity imaginable, and man using all his best intelligence to kill his fellow-man by the most devilish means. And over it all the peaceful moonlight of a perfect autumn night. The attack was over by 10.15, and now the guns are at it again. The Bulgarians are probably back in their old bits of first-line trench again, as the colonels agreed it would not be possible to hold them. They hope great things of tomorrow.

As we now know, those hopes were to be disappointed.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLEFIELDS OF FLORINA AND BANITSA

OCTOBER 15th.—The guns were thundering away all night, making a terrible din. They even woke me up several times, soundly as I sleep. One could have sworn they were just outside the tent, and varying with the guns came the sounds of counter-attacks or the alarms of such, when bursts of rifle fire, machine guns, and all the usual pandemonium rose on the air, making night hideous. Both sides would of course be on the alert and probably jumpy after the day they had just passed, and the row was understandable. The colonel had been too long at the game for the noise to rouse him, and no sound save snores came from his corner of the tent. This morning there were the usual conflicting rumours flying about. Apparently the French and Russians lost a bit of trench yesterday on the west between Medjidli and the foothills. They had, as the young French officer put it, had to “reculer un peu,” and the idea is that whilst the Bulgarians were counter-attacking to get the bit of trench they lost due north, the French and Russians were doing ditto to recover their lost ground. However, I heard nothing definite on that score before, with a heavy heart, I said farewell and left on my return to Ostrovo. The main fact is that the positions here

are going to give a deal of trouble before they are taken—if they can be ever taken by a direct frontal attack—which after yesterday's experience the experts here are already beginning to entertain doubts. As I have already said, dinner last night was rather a depressing affair, but as we turned in after the counter-attack to the north had died down, my friend cheered up a bit and told me several amusing yarns about his experiences in the East. He was also filled with curiosity about big-game shooting, and hearing that I had had a good deal of it in India and shot tiger, he plied me with questions. We got on to this subject after we had blown out our single dip, and were lying on our cots in the darkness with that appalling din going on outside. It struck me afterwards as an extraordinary position to be discussing big-game shooting with a Frenchman in a dark tent within sound and range of the guns and all the serious operations of war going on so near, and both of us entirely oblivious to them.

On the subject of the winter campaign on this front both the colonels appeared to be at a loss, as is everyone I have discussed the matter with; and as a transport officer myself I have naturally interested myself in the matter. No one seems to know how this question of the transport of ammunition and supplies is to be grappled with, once the bad weather sets in, with only a single line of railway and the one road, for it amounts to this practically for this part of the front. As the colonel said, doubling the line is impossible. It could be done, or have been done, from Salonika to Vertekop at the foot of the mountains and from Ostrovo to Florina perhaps, though in this lap there is the large broken viaduct, blown up by the Bulgarians, near

Ekshisu which will take a long time to repair. But the portion of the line between Vertekop and Ostrovo is a hopeless problem, as all who have been over it will be aware. On this length the gradients are appalling—so bad that ordinarily they can only run eight trains in the twenty-four hours, and they want about eighty! The roads are very bad, sandy or rocky tracks in the mountains very badly aligned; and often with long deep sandy stretches in the plains very badly cut up and likely to become impassable morasses when the rains begin. The roads to the different Serbian fronts again are almost purely mountain bridle paths which with each mile of the advance becomes more difficult to deal with. The road to the front of the 3rd Serbian Army I have already described. They say that the Bulgarians are in nearly the same plight in this respect, though one hears of one or two good well-graded and well-constructed roads in parts of the country behind their front; constructed under German supervision with Serbian labour! Some think that there will be no winter campaign, but it takes both parties to settle that, and the one who is advancing will be unlikely to want to retire into winter quarters.

The senior colonel left in his car for Ostrovo at 7.10 a.m. He offered me a lift, but with many thanks for the kind thought I refused. For one thing, as I explained, I had borrowed horses and considered it a duty to my friend the lender to remain with them and deliver them safely to their owner. For the other I wanted to return as I came on a horse in the good old-fashioned way, now going out for ever, more's the pity. Also I wanted to spend some time on the way back examining more closely the trench lines on the plain and up on the mountains between Banitsa and Gornicevo, and you

cannot do this in a car. The whole atmosphere was quivering with the terrific din of the bombardment, now in full swing again after the morning breakfast was over, as I said good-bye to my French friend, thanking him sincerely for his hospitality and the great opportunity he had been able to give me, and started back on the road to Ostrovo a little before eight. Much would I have given to be able to ride again in the opposite direction, but it was not to be. The orderly evinced no such desire. A smile of pleasure was on his face as we set our horses' heads southwards and away from the hell behind us.

The first part of the road was chiefly remarkable for the press of ammunition vehicles hurrying up to the Front (and they were badly required from all accounts) and the convoys of ambulances on their way down. There were also numerous parties of head and arm wounded "walking cases," on their way to the dressing stations after having received first aid behind the trenches or in them. All these men were smoking, smoking silently, for there was little conversation among them. Some of the faces wore a dazed expression, as if their owners even now had very little realisation of where they were or what they were doing. Others were cheerful, obviously glad to be out of the zone of death they had left behind them even if but for a short time. Soldiers nowadays don't look ahead but live entirely in the present, and they are right. The blacks, Senegalese, as I noticed yesterday, showed absolutely expressionless faces unless one spoke to them, and then two great rows of gleaming white teeth would appear in an enormous smile, lighting up the whole face for the moment. We obtained a fine view of Florina in passing

this morning as the weather was clear and bright. Partly perched on a little hill right under the western mountains with its white houses and gleaming minarets it occupies a most picturesque situation, and they tell me that in peace time it is a very interesting place to visit. It is now the headquarters of the General Cordonnier, commanding the French on this front, and General Sarraill is putting up there during the great push now on.

Save in the attack on Florina and one or two other instances, the French had a fairly easy job in driving the Bulgars back on to the Kenali line. Fortified posts in the foothills to the west had to be cleared, which gave some trouble. The trench lines running east and west across the plain south of the Kenali line are mostly shallow affairs, five to six feet deep and very often not so much. Here and there the line of a watercourse of greater depth was made use of, especially for hiding the guns wherever it was not too narrow to make it possible to fire them. The plain is slightly undulating in parts, especially on the eastern half, and thus gave some protection to advancing troops. But the Bulgars do not appear to have attempted any serious defences in the lower half, contenting themselves with the strong Kenali line and the one or more lines behind it as a defence for Monastir. Of greater interest than the actual trenches were the numerous shallow holes and depressions, dug with entrenching tools by the parties, platoons, half platoons and so on, advancing to the attack. These varied from a tiny heap of soil scratched out with the man's short spade as he lay under heavy fire; deeper holes with a good ridge of earth in front (how comfortable he must have felt when he had accomplished that!); to

larger ones where several men had lain down close together and joined up their protective ridges. Or in stony areas small piles of stones had been collected by the soldier, God knows how or at what risk, when he discovered he had no chance of digging owing to the rocky nature of the ground. These latter are the general rule in the hilly and mountainous country in these parts. The gun emplacements were equally interesting. In the soft soil of the plain these were good and deep in cases where the battery had obviously spent some time in the one spot; or the ravines, as already mentioned, had been utilised in turn by both infantry and artillery. Cavalry, both Bulgarian and French, had also been hidden in these, and animals of all kinds. In fact the whole of the Monastir plain behind the firing line, as seen this morning, is an education in French military tactics—that is so far as they relate to an advance in the open under fire from an enemy being pressed back. Those little shallow depressions, pits, and heaps of stones possessed a great fascination as I rode along, and I often left the road and made a deviation out into the fields to examine series of them. It was so easy to picture the men scattered across the plain, exposed to a withering fire, and advancing, ever advancing, by this means. Here one would be very shallow, hardly commenced, with a few inches of earth only scooped out. The maker had ceased suddenly—the cause of the cessation only too painfully obvious. These were the most pathetic. And pathetic in its way, but also full of promise and hope, was the scene I hit upon in one of my deviations from the road. I came upon it suddenly. Two furrows had been recently driven right across these shallow efforts of man to protect himself

from man. The Macedonian owner of the field, now ready to be ploughed, had paid but slight attention to these sad little relics of war, of the conflict which had so recently passed over his land, and ploughed through them as he had probably ploughed that bit of land at this season for years past, regardless of the efforts of his fellow men to protect themselves from a pitiless hail of lead. Nor was this a solitary instance of this resumption of agricultural life. Up in the mountains between Banitsa and Gornicevo and even on to Ostrovo I noticed that already the signs of war are disappearing. All bodies have been buried, shell cases and all the *débris* of the battlefield worth collection have been collected, and the aftermath of war has to a great degree been removed. The houses, mostly built of stones collected in the fields or neighbouring rocky hillsides, are being repaired or rebuilt in the rough fashion usual in these mountains, no mortar being used. Artillery fire has left very little of its marks up here, the ground being too rocky or stony; shell craters or large holes are practically absent. It will not be very long before the only witness of the bitter struggles which took place so recently over these mountain tracts will be the solitary graves or the tiny graveyards which form the last resting-places of those who fell. One felt, in noting this rapid recuperation in these fastnesses that there is in these a germ of hope for us all—though one realised that the more there was to lose, *i.e.* the greater the amount of destruction war could accomplish in a countryside, the longer must be the period of recuperation. A French colonial regiment was bivouacked alongside the road just below Banitsa. They were resting for the day after the long and arduous marches up from Salonika. A commissariat sergeant was engaged in giving out

stores, his assistants being black-faced curly-headed Senegalese, smart-looking youngsters in red fezes. I asked permission to take a photograph and the darkies smiled all over their faces, showing magnificent sets of ivory; which wide grins were maintained as most suitable for reproduction on the film. Continuing up the hill I mused on this question of food in war time. There is one thing which always possessed a fascination for me in reading about military campaigns, and that is the glorious uncertainty of the bivouacs of the various units engaged upon them. A unit will rough it for days or weeks, its food probably short in amount and poor in quality, and shaking down on its halts in the most uncomfortable surroundings, and then suddenly the fortune of war brings it to a town where they can sleep in a room, perhaps in a soft bed, even have their meals in a hotel and drinks in a café amongst a convivial crowd. To some extent one has been able to experience these ups and downs and glorious uncertainty for oneself out here, and been able to realise the extraordinary importance food now occupies in the daily life and thoughts. One can picture people at home saying—one has said it oneself—"He is always talking about food." Man, with all his civilisation, is undoubtedly nearer the animal in this respect than he suspects. Place him in situations where his daily meals are more or less of a toss-up, both in quality and amount, and he will soon find that the question takes a very prominent position in his thoughts.* And every good C.O. is well aware that the quality and quantity of the food, and regularity of the meals of his command bears a direct ratio to the amount of sickness

* This was written some months before food had become an all-absorbing topic at home.

experienced in it. When engaged upon the operations of war man is also more in need of and dependent upon convivial company. So far as making the best of a locality they are in from the food point of view, the French are better than we are. And this is, I think, chiefly due to the fact that they are infinitely better, and more varied, cooks. They can turn almost anything into an appetising meal—the great secret of comfortable campaigning. Of course heavy toll is taken from the country side, the wild country side I mean, and great destruction to animal life, especially small bird life, is committed in this way. It was a common sight to see a French car suddenly pull up on the road. A Frenchman with a gun would jump out, run a few paces off the road and loose off the gun at small birds he had spotted close by. The species of bird mattered nothing. With them most are useful for the pot, because they are capable of cooking them. Even if we had been willing to act in their fashion, we could have made nothing appetising out of the spoil. Eternal Irish stew and bully form our ark of refuge at the Front, as many hundreds of thousands of us know by now. My friend the colonel's table was extraordinarily good, and yet he certainly had no more, so far as supplies went, than you would find at any of our British officers' messes out here—I should think considerably less. And certainly the French commissariat, from what I was told, does not cost them anything like the sum we pay for ours. Of course no one bothers, much less complains—grumbles naturally, that is our national prerogative when really doing work worth the doing. But the contrast between the methods of the two nations at the Front in this respect is interesting to note.

Banitsa lay bathed in sunlight as we rode through it and only the thundering reverberations of the guns away to the north was there to remind us that war was so near. This as we continued on to Gornicevo sank to a dull rumbling noise until we reached the crest of the ridge, where it became distinct once more. The campaign this year, for these small towns, has been a brief one.

The long defile was in its usual congested state, a convoy of eight-horsed waggons being one of the worst places, as I rode down it with the familiar French exhortation to tired straining beasts, "Allez, allez," sounding in my ears.

CHAPTER XIX

THE OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIES ON THE WESTERN WING IN MACEDONIA, JULY TO NOVEMBER, 1916

It is proposed in this chapter to describe briefly in narrative form the operations of the Allies on the western wing in Macedonia between July and November 19th, on which date Monastir fell. This will involve some slight repetition of events already alluded to at the time of their occurrence, but this is unavoidable. The account shows the correlated sequence of the operations of the advance in their bearing the one to the other.

The offensive on this front was not commenced by the Allies, as had been expected, but by the Bulgars, and their advance was doubtless guided by the political position. It was almost certain that Roumania was about to enter the war on the side of the Allies, and an endeavour was made to intimidate her and at the same time to reopen communications with Greece. The German plan was to attack us on either wing by advancing south from Monastir to Florina and beyond on the west, and from Fort Roupel by the Struma on the east. It is the western movement I shall describe. Up to the 17th August the Bulgarians had not crossed the Greek frontier to any extent, being doubtless restrained from doing so by the German Emperor and German High Command. They had limited their operations to the

preparation of trenches and so on, on their side of the frontier. Fort Roupel on the east and within the Greek frontier was, as we have seen, given to them by the Greeks. There had, however, been some good hard fighting between the Bulgars and Serbs up in the Moglena Mountains from the latter part of July onwards.

The Monastir plain south of Kenali was held by the Serbians with very weak forces at this period.

Before an advance was made the positions were therefore as follows (*vide* map) :—

At the beginning of August the Bulgarians held the Kajmaktalan crest and several lower spurs to the south and the strong Starkov Grob crest to south-west of Kajmaktalan. West of these positions they held the lower crest lines down to and through Brod, situated in the foothills just above the Monastir plain. Westward from Brod they held the strong Brod-Kenali-Medjidli line as it came to be known. This line was laid down by Mackensen himself and the system of trenches and redoubts proved excessively strong, built on the lines of those in France and manned with plenty of machine guns. The line and one behind it had been built under the supervision of German engineers, who had had nearly eleven months for the job. To west of Medjidli the line swept up into the mountains again to Lake Presba, but the forces here on either side were few at that time.

Slightly S.S.E. of Kenali, some seven miles away, lies the village of Verbeni and a few miles to S.W. of the latter is situated Florina.

At the beginning of August the Serbians had a weak division in the Monastir plain and elsewhere, much scattered about. The advanced outposts were at

Verbeni with the remainder of two or three battalions at Florina and Banitsa. There was probably another battalion at Gornicevo on the mountain track between Banitsa and Ostrovo, and the rest of the available troops, amounting I believe to a weak brigade, were at Ostrovo. It was not thought that the Bulgarians would advance from the Kenali line, and the French were occupied in getting ready their forces to attack this line. The task set the Serbian forces—three armies of two numerically weak divisions apiece—was to attack on the line from Brod eastward to Kajmaktalan, and slightly to east of latter, Kenali and Kajmaktalan being the two chief objectives because the strongest positions.

As we know in war it is always the unexpected which happens.

On the 17th August, the Bulgarians suddenly advanced in some strength from the Kenali line, drove in the outposts from Verbeni and Florina, these falling back on Banitsa. The whole of the plain was soon in Bulgar hands, and the country south towards Kozani, and they advanced up the hills eastwards, taking Banitsa and then Gornicevo, eight kilometres beyond on the top of a high crest, the Serbians falling back to a lower crest immediately above the Lake Ostrovo. The Bulgars also advanced up the railway line along the west shore of the lake to a position slightly to N.W. of Pateli, within a few miles of Ostrovo. Communication was thus opened up with Greece *viâ* Kozani.

This was the position of affairs in the latter part of August, and there appeared every possibility of Ostrovo falling, thus enabling the Bulgars to capture the rest of the mountain section of the railway line down to Vertekop in the level country below. Had they done

this and blown up the viaducts, of which there are a number, it is almost certain that they would have stopped the projected advance on Monastir last year.

Reinforcements were sent up and arrived in time to hold Ostrovo, which was daily shelled and bombed for a fortnight or more.

Another of the reasons for the Bulgarian advance was doubtless military. A considerable increase was being made to the western wing of our Macedonian armies. French, Russian, and Italian troops were being landed in Salonika throughout August, especially the latter, whilst British M.T. units and cars were also pouring in to run the transport for the Serbians. The political reasons have been already discussed.

About the end of August then the Allies' western wing ran from east of Ekshisu railway station up north over the mountains east of and below Gornicevo to below Starkov Grob, and then east below Kajmakcalan and so on eastwards.

Towards the end of August the Bulgarian advance was held up, and at the beginning of September the Allies commenced to move forward in their turn. On the flank the French, supported by a part of a brigade of Russians, advanced by road and railway (using both the Ostrovo and Verria-Kozani roads) and retook Ekshisu, not in time, however, to prevent the blowing up of the great viaduct which carried the railway beyond Ekshisu to Florina. The French then swung to the north into the southern end of the Monastir plain and retook Banitsa, and fighting every yard of the way approached the Greek town of Florina, situated up against the western mountain wall, and about one-third up the plain from the south. This town and the railway station

were carried by storm after a brilliant assault on Sunday and Sunday night of September 18th, the Bulgars being driven out in full flight back to their strongly entrenched Kenali line situated two-thirds up the plain from the south. This capture put an end for the moment to the series of operations the French had been undertaking. They advanced the few miles to Verbeni and then awaited reinforcements of men and guns before attempting a frontal attack on the Kenali line. The advance resulting in the capture of Florina had of course been undertaken by the French and Russians in conjunction with the Serbians, who were operating in the mountains on the right. The Bulgars had been turned out of Florina exactly a month after they had seized it. Monastir, taken by them in December 1915, was still in their hands.

The Serbian movements during this period must now be considered, for they were to lead to even greater progress than resulted from the capture of Florina.

The first operations confronting the Serbians were to push back the Bulgars from the heights in the neighbourhood of Ostrovo and clear them from the Ostrovo-Banitsa mountain track. This work was carried out by the 1st and a portion of the 3rd Serbian Armies under Marshal Mishitch and General Wassitch respectively. The village of Gornicevo and the crest of that mountain E.N.E. of Ostrovo was the first objective. These were held by the Bulgars. A line of shallow trenches faced with stone parapets just below the crest was protected by a formidable wire entanglement several yards wide, consisting of stout iron uprights interwoven with a maze of stout trebled barbed wire. The Serbs held a lower crest to the east about

three miles nearer Ostrovo. Gornicevo was taken by assault on September 12th.

After the capture of Gornicevo, the Serbians turned their attention to the strong positions on Kajmaktealan and Starkov Grob. On the Kajmaktealan there were three main positions to carry with two to three lines of trenches in each, the lowest and uppermost being the strongest. The lowest was in a small upland valley ; the middle one half-way up a series of swelling ridges and spurs, the last on the rising plateau which forms the summit of the mountain.

The whole area was above tree limit, a great open barren waste of rock with but few soft areas. It was only in the latter that any permanent visible marks of shell fire, such as craters, etc., were to be seen. The great assaults on this position were made between September 15th and 30th, the lowest line falling after a terrific fight on September 18th, whilst the uppermost crest was stormed and carried on September 30th, the Bulgars being driven down the steep precipitous slopes to the north—probably the best fight the Serbs have ever put up. But their native country lay upon that crest—a fine incentive to fight.

Whilst Kajmaktealan was being fought and won by the 3rd Serbian Army, the 1st Army to the west was clearing the mountains to the N. and N.W., so that by the beginning of October the Serb line was straightened out from Kajmaktealan to Brod due west, where it connected with the French line running westward from just below Brod through Kenali and Medjidli and up into the western mountains to Lake Presba. The line therefore now completely fronted the N. and N.W. and had lost a dangerous salient.

The September victories of the Allies gave them the southern part of the Monastir plain and enabled the Serbian Army to move down from the captured Kajmaktalan against the Bulgar positions in the Chuke mountains. The German-Bulgar line now stretched across the Chuke heights with their numerous fortified villages to the Cherna river and thence across the plain by Brod, Kenali (situated about ten miles to the S.E. of Monastir), and Medjidli and up the western mountains to Lake Presba.

A general advance by the Franco-Russian-Serbian Armies was now determined upon, the French and Russians, strengthened by some French colonial regiments, making ready for their grand assault on the Kenali line, the breaking of which and the less strong one behind it would leave the way free to Monastir. These attacks took place during October. The Serbians continued to make some small progress during the first fortnight in the mountains on the right, in the neighbourhood of Krusogrod and elsewhere, but the main objective during this month was the Kenali line.

The first assault was made by the French on October 14th. A grand artillery preparation took place for forty-eight hours and at midday the French infantry advanced to the attack, which was carried out under the personal supervision of General Sarrail himself. I had ridden across the mountains the day before *viâ* Gornicevo, and had the good luck to spend the whole day on the small hill from which the General conducted the attack and witnessed the whole of the operations. The pounding of the guns soon set Kenali, Medjidli and Brod burning, as also outlying farms. At midday the guns were lifted off the front-line trenches and the

French infantry went into the attack. For three and a half hours they fought like tigers, the colonial corps distinguishing themselves, but only a small portion of a first-line trench was captured. The German engineers had laid out the position too well, the trenches being deep, with redoubts and forts after the pattern on the western front, and the artillery was insufficient to smash them in. After the failure of the attack the guns again took up the matter and several days of incessant pounding were followed by a second assault which had no better fortune. The Kenali line with the forces at the disposal of General Sarrail was impregnable and was never taken by frontal attack.

Three days after the first unsuccessful attack, *i.e.* on October 17th, the Serbs in the hills to the east made a fine sudden thrust across the Cherna river, taking by assault the villages of Brod, Gardilovo and Veliselo. The Bulgars, thoroughly beaten, broke and fled, pursued by Serbian cavalry. This sudden advance geographically speaking turned the Kenali line, since the Serbs in the mountains were now behind the Kenali alignment. The distance gained in this movement was unexpected even by the Serbians themselves. After the second unsuccessful frontal attack on the Kenali line by the French and Russians it was perceived that success here could only be looked for by outflanking this formidable position and the Serbians under Marshal Mishitch, after their success on the Cherna, were reinforced by some French infantry regiments and heavily supported by French artillery, of which some batteries were transferred from in front of the Kenali line. Whilst the French and Russians, strengthened by some Italians, continued to watch the Kenali line—the task of storming the

Chuke heights and so turning the enemy's left, was assigned to the reinforced Serbs. The general advance commenced on November 10th. During the four following days, November 10th to 14th, a fierce fight took place between the Serbs and Bulgars, who had some Germans to help them. Foot by foot the Serbs fought, carrying village after village and capturing more than 3000 prisoners and at least thirty guns. By the fourteenth they had reached points from which they seriously threatened the flank of the Kenali line.

The opinion of the Serbs on the fighting qualities of the Bulgars was that the latter fought fiercely and savagely up to a certain point, but under adverse conditions they were liable to "crack" when a *sauve qui peut* would take place. And the evidence of the Kajmaktalan and the later fights would seem to show that this opinion is correct. The outflanking of the Kenali line resulted in the withdrawal of the Bulgars from this extremely strong position, and on the 15th the French, Russians and Italians made a general advance and took possession of the Kenali line, capturing Velushina on the western heights which turned the position on the enemy's right. The latter fell back to their last line on the Bistritza, less than four miles from Monastir. This line had, however, been already turned by the capture of Negochani on the Cherna by the Serbs, and the latter were still advancing over the mountain ranges, thus threatening the only line open to the Bulgars by which to withdraw their guns and transport—the road to Prilep situated in the foothills to the N.E. of the Monastir plain.

It was the advance made by the Serbs on the 16th, 17th, and 18th, which finally settled the fate of Monastir.



FRENCH CAVALRY ON WAY TO ENTER MONASTIR, NOV. 1916



THE TRANSPORT OFFICER

The capture of Hill 1212 to the east of Monastir sounded the death-knell to the hopes of the enemy holding the Bistritza line. They counter-attacked desperately to retake Hill 1212, but failed, and on the 18th the Serbs captured Hill 1378. The Bulgarians retreated towards Prilep in complete disorder, having abandoned artillery, stores, and losing many men taken prisoners.

The Allies entered Monastir early on the 19th unopposed, the French cavalry getting in on the heels of the enemy's rearguard from the south, whilst a portion of a Serbian cavalry regiment, after fording a river in flood, entered from the west.

The French infantry went through the town and took up lines to the north. The German reinforcements, including some of the Prussian Guards which were being hurried up to save the town, were too late.

Monastir had fallen.

The brave French were the first to affirm that the capture of Monastir was primarily due to the gallant Serbs. It was the fighting Serbs who stormed dread Kajmaktealan, one of the finest feats of the campaign; it was the Serbs who forced the passage of the Cherna, and carried successively the rocky heights of the Chuke Mountains. We may all admiringly re-echo the remark of the French colonel, among the first to enter the town, "It is thanks to the Serbians that we have won Monastir."

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